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THE
HARDMAN
FAMILY

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The Boardman Family

By Mary S. Watts

Many novels are written about people of genius or talent who rise to fame from poverty and privation. In this novel Mrs. Watts begins at the other end of the scale. Her heroine is a young woman who was brought up in the most rigid traditions of gentility; a woman who might have stayed at home and been taken care of had she so chosen—but who did not so choose. It is with her emancipation that Mrs. Watts is principally concerned; an emancipation that is wrought by her work and art and native common sense. The narrative occupies a period of about fifteen years, beginning with the first year of the present century. In its central figure it adds another outstanding character to the notable list of creations which its author has already given to literature.

THE BOARDMAN FAMILY



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THE BOARDMAN FAMILY

BY

MARY S. WATTS

Author of "Nathan Burke," "The Rise
of Jennie Cushing," etc.

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THE BOARDMAN FAMILY



By
Mary S. Watts
Author of "Nathan Burke,"
of "Van Cleve" &c.

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PART I

Dear & dear, May 11/8.

THE BOARDMAN FAMILY

AND SOME OTHERS

CHAPTER I

ONE Tuesday evening towards the Christmas holidays in an early year of the earliest decade of this century, there was an awning tunnel erected across the sidewalk and a strip of jute carpeting laid down the steps in front of Mr. Matson's, Number Two, Pine Street, the North Hill; and a good many private conveyances — more carriages than automobiles in those remote days — were rumbling up and halting and presently rumbling off after exhilarating noises of doors slammed and numbers shouted. Mr. Matson had a dancing-school. It long ago ceased to be in good taste to call him Professor or his establishment an Academy, as was the fashion once upon a time in other parts of the world besides ours. Likewise the midwinter entertainment and the one he gave at Easter were not "*Soirées*" — perish the thought! They were unpretending Exhibitions of Dancing by the pupils of Mr. Norman R. Matson's School in the Classical, Ballet and Ball-Room Departments, from half-past eight to ten; general dancing after the exhibition. The pupils who exhibited were mainly young girls with a rare boy or so; at this date Society at large had not yet begun to take a vivid interest in the art, and a dancing-school was still eminently a place of juvenile education.

The carriages rolled up gloriously, and Mr. Matson's coloured man with white cotton gloves on, opened the doors

and dispensed the little numbered tickets, and there descended a great array of shiny satin slippers and foaming tulle skirts, beaded, glittering and glancing (the *Fairy Ballet*), of laced sandals, fillets, cheesecloth draperies (the *Urn-Dance of the Priestesses of Minerva*) of crinoline, flowered cretonne and cottony-looking wigs — the *Colonial Minuet*. There was a kind of environing haze of parents, of course, but nobody need notice *them*; and always a set of gawky high-school lads gathered about the halls and boys' dressing-rooms for the general dancing promised later on. They could all dance; doubtless many of them were capable of as good dancing as any that would be seen that evening; but nothing on earth would have induced these young gentlemen to "exhibit." Get up in front of all that crowd? Never! Although getting up in front of all that crowd was precisely what they did when the exhibiting was over! Let some wiser mind explain the mystery; and let him also take note of another curious fact, namely: that although Papa and Mama, even Grand-papa and Grandmamma and Uncle Joe and Aunt Sarah invariably turned out in force, big brother who was in Judge Whoppingfee's office, who smoked cigars and had a nightkey and belonged to the Harvard Club, and wore evening-clothes in the evening — unlike Dad who slouched around in the same old business-suit he had had on all day — big brother never went to the Exhibition! And older sister who came out last winter and got three hundred and ten bouquets at her party, and was a member of the *Débutantes' Cotillion* and appeared at the *Riding Club Amateur Circus* — nobody ever saw *her* at the Exhibition!

After a while there came a livery-stable equipage whence alighted first a tall and slender figure with a three-cornered hat topping off an accurately dressed peruke, and a prodigious, long, dramatic black cloak wrapped in folds

and held well up about the eyes; it made one think of certain novels of Mr. Weyman and Mr. Anthony Hope which were new then and classics by now; and it caused the porter to look twice — for that matter anybody would have looked twice — and exclaim: “Well, *sir*, Mr. Everett, I didn’t know you for a minute!” Whereat the other laughed affably, with a flash of white teeth in the shadow of his mantle. He had a hand on the open carriage-door, but did not abandon his graceful pose — being, it would seem, very deliberate in all his movements — until the three ladies within had all bundled out unassisted, a circumstance which in spite of his little shocked exclamation and gesture as he finally turned his attention to them, appeared not to surprise or disturb any one of them in the least. All three managed excellently without his help — the girl in the mantilla and the short red skirt, the plump lady, the tall, bony older one; and they all sprang up the steps with an almost equal sprightliness of motion, notwithstanding the visible difference in their ages, and slipped out of sight behind the dressing-room doors while Mr. Everett was still giving orders to the hackman.

He gave them with a perfectly unaffected grand air, like a young prince, and went on up into the vestibule where amongst the gawky youths, a particularly gawky long, lank one addressed him, with an up-and-down glance.

“’Lo, Ev!”

“’Lo, Sam!” said Everett, making for the dressing-room. The other followed him. Within, some of the boys were smoking cigarettes, a few of the youngest ones indulged in very mild and subdued skylarking, but mostly they wore the dispirited air peculiar to the youthful male on festive occasions, the group who were to take part with Everett looking not nearly so cheerful as the average collection of pall-bearers. They sat hunched on the tables,

or leaned against the walls, and gave him a depressed greeting.

"Some costume!" one of them remarked as Everett de-rolled the majestic cloak — without either envy or derision, however. He stated it as a plain fact, and the rest accepted it in the same manner. This was the more noticeable because Everett's millinery, worn by any of the others, would have subjected the unlucky lad to pitiless mocking comment. It was a confection of black satin coat and knee-breeches, a waistcoat brocaded in opalescent hues, abundant lace ruffles, buckled shoes of an unmanly shape and size, a cane and eyeglass — in short, the full and carefully studied get-up of an eighteenth-century beau. The members of Everett's seventeen-year-old circle, one and all, would have cringed away in agonies of self-consciousness, they would have looked, acted, felt, like mortally clumsy young clowns, they would have been "guyed" to extinction by their fellows had they dared to come out in such an array. But nobody poked either fun or satire at Everett; and indeed he wore the clothes with a conquering indifference as if he had had them on every day of his life, and somehow invested their romance with conviction and dignity. His half-dozen companions in the *Minuet* surveyed him and anon privately reviewed their own makeshifts — retired coats and trousers trimmed and faced by maternal hands, vests which were an ingenious falsework fashioned from scraps of curtain-stuff, Susie's last season hat — tell it not in Gath! — pinned into shape and its identity further obscured by some ghastly parody of a cockade — they eyed it all with fresh misgivings, fresh resentment for having been driven into this thing. Even so, they did not seek solace by taking a fling at Everett; perhaps they admired him, or were impressed by him, or really liked him too much.

"Hire yours?" they inquired wistfully.

"No. I wouldn't like to wear anything that all kinds of people had had on before. If it were some fellow's clothes that I knew, of course—I wouldn't mind *that*. But these costume places—! Not for me!" Everett wagged his head and laughed, and the rest laughed with him, appreciatively, though not one of them shared his feeling, or would have owned to it, at any rate; it seemed natural and not unworthy for Everett to be thus fastidious. "I had it made. Might as well and be done with it. Then there'll be something ready in case I ever have to go through with this flossy business again," he concluded. Coming from him, the argument sounded practical, and struck a note of humorous common-sense; it eluded criticism. And Everett sat down, disposing himself and his raiment with grimacing care; he had not so much as glanced into a mirror since entering the room.

"Had it made? Gee, that didn't set your father back a whole lot! Oh, yes, it did not!" remarked the boy they called Sam with engaging frankness. Sam was not going to appear in the Exhibition; in fact, he would not have been much of an ornament to any scene, having just reached that stage in a gentleman's career when he seems to be all feet and hands, and nameless bones, knobs, joints; and when nothing fits or stays in place, so that the exceedingly cheap, ready-made suit he was wearing (and outgrowing) probably looked as well on him as anything could have, no matter how costly. Nor would Samuel's blunt features, tawny skin and square mouth (which was furnished with a very fine set of big white teeth that had the look of imperishable strength and soundness) have accorded handsomely with the gay and delicate frippery Everett was sporting. "You haven't got your growth yet, Ev," he went on. "Chances are in a year or two

you won't be able to get into that happy vest. How about it?"

"Oh, I can always sell it," retorted Everett easily. "I spoke about that to Dad. He said it was all right."

"Sell it, huh? Well, I can't shake *my* father down that easy!" Sam said; his tone expressed no discontent, as might have been expected. Providence discriminates in the matter of fathers, and Master Samuel accepted the fact philosophically. "Yours didn't come?"

"Who? Dad? No, he doesn't care for the Exhibitions."

"I saw your mother, though."

"Oh, Mother and Grandma are always on hand. They'd come if they had to walk!" Everett said.

The other boy, who had been idly glancing about the room, and at every newcomer when the door opened, as he kept up this desultory talk, focussed his alert blue eyes on Everett for a moment questioningly. One might have guessed that the thought going through his mind, phrased roughly in his boy's language was: What if they did walk? It wouldn't hurt them. Nobody was too good to walk. Sam's own mother had had to walk all her days. But it must have been apparent to his shrewd scrutiny that Everett had spoken without conscious ostentation; his point of view was genuinely royal. At any rate, Sam left the above comments unuttered. He merely said: "Uh-huh," and continued to stare thoughtfully, cracking one pair of fingers after another.

"Mother has to help Sandra change her dress anyhow," Everett explained after a moment. "You know she's going to be in the *Minuet* after all. She's taking Helen Carruthers' place. Helen fell and sprained her ankle; you heard about that?"

"Uh-huh," said Sam again.

"Sandra's going to do Helen's part, and her own too, that Spanish dance, besides."

"Sandra's some dancer," Sam affirmed judicially.

"Well, of course, it wasn't much for her to learn the *Minuet* with me right there to show her and coach her. But she never has any trouble learning anyhow — just show her a step once. We're both that way. Been dancing all our lives, ever since we were kids."

"That so?" said Sam, and studied the other again; for half a second the expression on his boyish face was not boy-like. Then he remarked with the slightest possible fleeting grin: "At home the folks think I'm a kid still."

"Yes. It takes 'em forever to realize that we've grown up." Everett agreed in so serious, simple and matter-of-fact a way that the other boy was impressed in spite of himself. His grin vanished along with whatever immature and uncertain suspicions he may have entertained of a certain irony in the spectacle of Everett.

"That's so!" he said, this time with warmth. "Gee, don't it make you tired sometimes? They're all right, of course, but they're so funny. Say, do you have a night-key?"

"No. I don't want one particularly," said Everett calmly. "I could if I wanted."

It was on Sam's tongue to say: "Oh, bosh!" Yet, as before, he changed his mind; as before, Everett's serene assurance defeated him. Instead he began grumblingly to describe a "run-in" he had had with his father on this very subject that morning; he pulled up in the middle of the tale, surprised at himself and rather ashamed; and then saw with mingled relief and resentment that Everett was not listening. Indeed, the young gentlemen's confidences had to end now, whether or no, for the Exhibition was about to open. Chairs ceased

to scrape in the hall; the last guest was seated. Miss Hoffman (in a low-necked dress instead of her familiar shirt-waist and skirt) was already on the platform at the piano, strumming with one finger on A and gazing interestedly around at the audience, while the two violins tuned alongside her. Mr. Matson was in his place by the door, erect, with folded arms, and that expression of adamantine patience which never entirely left his countenance even in moments of conventional relaxation such as this. Mrs. Matson and Mdlle. Mantegna were marshalling the little girls of the Junior Class for the entrance of the Will-o'-the-wisps and the Night Breezes preluding that of the Fairies. The boys filed in, unobtrusively aligning themselves against the walls.

"What you and Everett Boardman having a heart-to-heart about?" some boy whispered in Sam's ear.

"Nothing," said Sam gruffly. "We were just talking." He was feeling a little out of temper with himself, and visited his dissatisfaction upon Everett's head; even the best of us are prone to dislike the person to whom we have told too much. Samuel said inwardly that he never did have any use for Everett Boardman; now Sandra was different; she was all right — for a girl, that is. She — the Fairies appeared!

They were very pretty and graceful, and gambolled rhythmically about the stage with wands and chains of flowers, to the complete gratification of their assembled parents; after them a diminutive young lady in waving multi-coloured chiffons "interpreted" Mendelssohn's Spring Song in a series of leaps, swoops and circles, scattering blossoms and picking them up with a somewhat fixed and intent face for one so carelessly occupied; then the Priestesses of Minerva had their innings, to put it profanely; after that a pair of small boys with burnt-

corked faces, extravagant collars and long-tailed coats did a clog-dance that brought forth the first genuine applause of the evening — alas for classic ideals! And then came: “Fandango: Miss Alexandra Boardman” according to the program.

Miss Alexandra Boardman entered boldly, a slim miss with a red skirt, a ragged lace scarf twisted about her waist and bare shoulders and sleek black head, a red rose behind her ear, a gaudy fan; her otherwise pallid cheeks had been liberally embellished with daubs of rouge, as also her thin and firm lips. She swaggered to the centre of the stage, gave the audience a glance out of her great black eyes at once indifferent and provocative, stuck one arm akimbo, and with a volley from the castanets, the dance began.

Our acquaintance, Mr. Samuel Thatcher, leaning against the wall, with his coat crawling up across his shoulders and his generous-sized feet being trodden upon by various members of the community, watched her, unconscious of both these discomforts. He knew her well, and had never thought her pretty; in truth she was not noticeably so. But Sam had no time, as it were, to take account of her looks; some other quality about her flashing presence, something far more powerful than mere beauty, yet too subtle for him to grasp, took the boy's breath, held him gazing till his eyeballs ached. He did not know that technically she presented an astonishingly faithful rendering of some Spanish hussy, dancing in a tavern before a ring of bull-fighters, grooms, beggars, men-about-town, Phrynes of low degree, herself no better; her fandango was a feat of imagination no less than an exhibition of grace and accuracy, but Sam did not know that. He would have recoiled from thinking such things about any nice girl like Sandra Boardman. He was dazed and

fascinated and perhaps even a little frightened; this creature with her movements light and ardent as a flame, her exotic smile was so uncannily distinct from the girl he knew. There was a great outburst of applause in which he joined mechanically. Sandra came back and bowed and bowed again. It was some time before the audience, remembering its manners and that the other young performers had not received such spontaneous approval, ceased clapping. As the noise subsided, Sam heard the fag-end of a murmured conversation between two ladies in front of him.

" . . . too *professional*, really."

"Well, yes — a little," the other admitted guardedly. "I heard Matson considered her one of his best pupils."

"But he ought not to have let her, or encouraged her . . . like an actress . . . it's not in good taste. Of course, Mr. Matson is very nice, but after all, he's only a dancing-teacher; you can't tell what sort of ideas he was brought up with — what kind of people he comes from. . . . All very well if she were going on the stage, but she's a *young lady*. I shouldn't think Mrs. Boardman herself would like it. You want your daughter to appear well in a ball-room naturally, but she doesn't need to seem prepared for the Follies, or vaudeville. . . . So much nicer if she had just been *simple* and *sweet* and *girlish*. This was altogether too Carmen-y. . . ."

Sam made an abrupt movement; he almost interrupted with: "But she *did* — she *was*! When she got that encore, she looked all right — just the way she always does. Didn't you notice? Why, that's what gets me! The way she changed back to *herself* all at once. Do you mean to say you didn't see it, too?" But a due regard for his reputation for sanity restrained him; "I'd look bright butting in, wouldn't I?" he reflected prudently. The

two heads wagged together, the conversation flowed on steadily under cover of the music while Samuel was still considering the phenomenal ability at masking and unmasking just displayed by Sandra Boardman. All the other girls on the stage had looked exactly like their everyday selves; they were just dressed up differently, but Sandra — why, she was two girls, two separate people! Several other dancers came and went without getting much attention from him; it was not until the lace-like melody of Boccherini's Minuet began to sound that Sam gave up the riddle. He looked again toward the stage with reviving interest, not in Miss Boardman personally — not at all! — but he would have freely owned to a vast curiosity as to how she was going to carry off Helen Carruthers' part in a dance essentially different.

She carried it off with another exhibition of gifts akin to those of a chameleon! She was propriety itself in panniers and a fichu. To be sure, a slightly coquettish propriety with an artful little black patch at the corner of one of her dark eyes which could not help being big and brilliant under their slender straight brows; but otherwise as sweet and simple as you please, pacing through the demure figures of the dance with a sweetness and simplicity that must placate even the critics in Sam's neighbourhood. Yet the boy himself was puzzled to find her, or fancy her, as foreign in this rôle as in the other. She seemed to have put off her own character for that of the dance, gracious and artificial. Sam, comparing her with the rest, decided in a confusion of opinions that somehow left one main opinion clear, that Sandra was not a bit better than they as far as the mere dancing was concerned; but there was not one of them who could "do it" as well as she — not even Everett who was conspicuously perfect. What he meant by "doing it"

Samuel could not have explained; but it was no idle phrase. Sandra could "do it" and the others couldn't, either because they couldn't learn, or because it was something that could not be taught. It occurred to him that she might not be aware of this curious power herself; she might "do it" without knowing it. He made up his mind to ask her.

The Exhibition ended with the *Minuet*. Everybody got up; a great shoving-back and carrying-out of chairs began in preparation for the general dancing; already some adventurous couples were on the floor. Sam, who was a conscientious youth, recalling certain injunctions, hunted up his cousin Julia (the George Thatchers' little girl, Samuel was one of the Steven B. family) and took her around the room in a two-step—two-steps were still popular at this date. Julia was a fat little chunk, very light on her feet as many fat people are, so that dancing with her was no piece of self-sacrifice, if she had not been "such a kid." She was in the Eighth Grade and young Mr. Thatcher had reached an age when he preferred his ladies to be mature; like Miss Lorrie Gilbert, for instance—towards whom he was just now rather sentimentally inclined—who was in society before Sam had emerged from kindergarten. Afterwards he found another partner or two among the Fairies and Priestesses who were now at large in the ball-room; Everett Boardman was circulating faultlessly with one of them; and presently Sam fell in with Sandra in her minuet costume, under the chaperonage of a tall, thin, sallow old lady with black eyes, between whom and Sandra herself there existed a slight, ominous resemblance. Her dress was a negligible matter to Samuel, but it may be noted here that she wore—not without distinction—plain black with a plain black toque; and in the fine jabot at her

throat there was fastened a plaque of jet on which was dished up, so to speak, a cameo head in profile garnished with a wreath of split pearls — a portrait of the late Alexander Boardman whose widow she had been for years. The growing taste for antiquity must have caused this brooch to be rummaged out of some seldom-visited drawer, for the late Alexander was not actually very late. He passed from this sphere about eighteen-eighty-five, and Mrs. Alexander was probably verging on seventy by this time; but the glance she cast on young Sam Thatcher was still quick and bright. He and Sandra exchanged salutations with the breezy informality of their generation. "Hello!" they challenged each other.

"Congratulations!" said Sam. "You and Ev were the ringers!"

She bobbed him a little curtsy. "Oh, Mr. Thatcher, how kind! Grandma, it's Sam. You know him."

"Do I?" said the old lady with humorous surprise. "Oh, yes, to be sure!" She nodded at him in a manner of friendly carelessness.

"Dance this, Sandra?"

"All right."

They went off together. Mrs. Boardman, preserving her air of pleasant detachment, went and found a chair for herself in a corner. She was a rather unusual old lady in the fact that nobody ever waited on her; she never seemed to need it.

"Honestly, you were great," said Sam as the two young people circled the room. "I didn't know you at first."

"Well, I don't know whether that's a bouquet or a brickbat!"

"Oh, of course I *knew* you. I didn't mean I didn't *recognize* you. Only — I don't see how you make yourself seem so different."

"Why, it's the costume and the paint, of course," said Sandra, openly. "I was all made up. Black goo all around my eyes, and everything, didn't you notice? Mademoiselle put it on for me. She's been on the stage, you know, so she knows exactly how it's going to look to the audience. Awfully queer. You first smear all over with cold cream, and then —"

Sam interrupted unceremoniously. "Yes, I know. That's not what I mean, either. *Oh!* (Oh, that's all right! Excuse *me!* My fault!) It wasn't my fault all the same, Sandra. I believe that fellow has something against me; if I don't keep dodging him, we'll have another cute little collision directly. What I meant was that you — you weren't like yourself somehow."

"I should hope *not!*" Sandra declared with emphasis. "In that fandango I had to be *common* — like a *common* girl, you know."

Sam pondered this statement while his feet moved in time, and he automatically kept an eye out for less skilled dancers. "Why?" he asked at last. "Nobody was making you."

"Goodness, no! But I — well, I read up about it. Those dances are only done by the commonest kind of people in Spain. The nice ones dance just the way we do. The kind that dance fandangoes and cachuchas and things are awfully vulgar, it said. I wanted to do it *right*."

"Well, I don't believe most girls would be as thorough as all that," said Sam, after another moment of consideration.

"You don't like my doing it that way, either, then?"

"Oh, I didn't say I didn't *like* it," said Sam, feeling uncomfortably that she might really have penetrated to the heart of the matter. "I thought it was great," he pro-

tested anxiously. "Only I couldn't make out why you seemed so different. Was it hard?"

"No — yes — I don't know," Sandra said. They dropped out of the dance, adjourning to the ice-water. "Just the *dancing* wasn't hard," said Sandra between sips. She began to laugh. "Ev and Mother didn't like it a little bit!"

"They didn't?"

"No. Mother nearly had a fit over that paint. Grandma just laughed and said something about local colour. Grandma doesn't really care what anybody does; she's always so easy."

"Didn't they know beforehand?"

Sandra shook her head with a puzzled look. "They didn't seem to take it in somehow, until they saw me up there on the stage. Of course I'd practised — but you don't look the same or feel the same, for that matter, practising around in any old skirt and ordinary slippers. I always know when I'm doing it right, though," she added without either complacency or false diffidence. "Mademoiselle was too funny! She kissed me and said, "*Ca y est!*" and clicked with her tongue that way she does as if she was tasting something extra good. That was after the fandango, you know, when all the while I knew by the look on Mother's face that she was ready to *roast* Mademoiselle over a slow fire! She thought it was Mademoiselle had put it into my head, and it wasn't at all! I made it up all by myself."

"Well, look here, did you do that same way about the minuet, too? Read up, and — and all the rest of it?" Sam asked her, deeply interested.

"Yes, but it wasn't nearly so hard," the girl said. "The minuet's awfully — well — flimsy, you know. It makes me think of whipped cream and pink tissue-paper,

and — and bunches of flowers that are just a little faded — silly things like that. There isn't anything *to* it — it's just pretty. Hello!" And before Samuel could express his perplexity over these picturesque statements, she had gone off with another partner.

He went meditatively back to the ball-room; they were playing a waltz, slow, languid and seductive in character, a new waltz that Sam did not recognize (it was the *Merry Widow*!) and he could see Sandra and her partner gyrating deliberately and suavely. The girl's slim feet seemed scarcely to move. Sam remarked to himself that she sure could dance; and that that was a funny line of talk she had been handing him, but he believed she meant every word of it. In this simple language were most of young Mr. Thatcher's thoughts framed.

It happened that a hurried-looking gentleman had come in a few minutes before, and had first spoken to Mr. Matson in a corner, and now was canvassing the audience and dancers anxiously; and Mr. Matson, too, was going from group to group with a perturbed face. Little Julia Thatcher piped out in her high, youthful voice: "Why, there's Daddy! Here we are, Daddy!" and that drew Sam's attention; he saw his uncle coming towards him, not seeming to heed Julia, and went to meet him, wondering.

"Oh, Sam, here you are!" said George Thatcher. "I — I'm glad I found you." He stopped, hesitated, and then said abruptly: "You must come home with me right away. Your father's sick."

"Father? Sick? Why, he was all right at dinner," said Sam, staring. But in another second he recovered from his surprise, and said: "All right, Uncle George! Wait till I get my coat."

There was a little hush among those nearest as he

shouldered off to the dressing-room. Mrs. Thatcher came and hurried Julia away. But the music and dancing went on. Mr. Matson came back to Mr. Thatcher's side and said in a low voice: "I'm very sorry —" and something else about hoping it was not so serious as they feared.

"It can't be any more serious," said George Thatcher gloomily. Sam came out of the dressing-room, buttoning his overcoat, and his uncle took him by the arm and they went off together, walking fast.

CHAPTER II

IN pioneer days when this city was little more than a settlement of log cabins around a log fort, one of a meagre chain of such settlements along the Ohio and Mississippi rivers from Pittsburgh to the Gulf, there came out from New England and added himself to us, Doctor Jacob Boardman. Notwithstanding his title, the doctor's saddlebags were stuffed with neither Bibles nor bottles of physic; on the contrary, it is likely that they held a considerable supply of hard cash. Jacob was no ministering angel to either bodily or spiritual needs, being, as I have heard, an extremely practical and hard-headed gentleman, nearing middle-life; and he had set out a-pioneering not from any patriotic desire to extend our civilization, or grow up with the country, but simply because he thought there might be something in it financially. He had already made a good deal of money and proposed to make more in the new territory — the new State, to speak correctly. Nowadays he would have been called a speculator or promoter, perhaps; in his own era he was "Doc." Boardman whose occupation was trading round in real estate.

He must have traded round, on the whole, successfully; at any rate, his activities in that line are immortalized in the name of one locality, Boardman Alley, and at the abstract-and-guarantee offices they will tell you that ever so many titles go back to Jacob Boardman. At the most prosperous time in his career, he bought a large tract of land lying along one of those shelves or benches where the hills begin to descend to the river; it commanded a beau-

tiful view, was far enough from town to be elegantly secluded, and near enough for convenience, and Doctor Boardman who rarely forgot the main chance or neglected to aim at two birds with one stone (whether he brought them down or not) intended to erect thereon a handsome residence for himself and render the place so attractive that before long all the people in town of taste and sufficient wealth would flock around him eager to make their homes, too, on some of the numerous charming sites his property offered.

He built the house, a huge old stone rookery which is standing to this day, a monument to Jacob's one bad guess; for those expectations of his were never realized. Somehow the tide of fashion in suburban building-plots set another way for no reasonable reason, and ultimately left the Boardman homestead stranded out of reach of everybody in an undesirable neighbourhood with the slums actually encroaching upon it in later years, after the doctor's day. He died a much poorer man — though still very well-to-do — for having made that venture.

Doctor Boardman left the large family popular in his time, Willis Boardman, Jacob junior, Rachel, Martha, William — no outsider can remember all the names; Alexander was the youngest, or came along towards the last of them, anyhow; he was the only one to remain here and live in the house his father built and carry on the Boardman dynasty among us. The others scattered as families do, and founded new lines of Boardmans elsewhere, none of which, however, could have arrived at the local dignity and importance of ours. In all probability there is not another Boardman Alley on this continent!

Alexander Boardman married a Miss Sarah Chase of Washington, and half a dozen other places, for she was a daughter of Commodore Chase of the Navy and had lived

all over the world. At that date — during the fifties — to belong to the Army or Navy or to be an Episcopalian definitely established a person's rank in our society; it is true you might possess none of these qualifications and still be well received, but possessing them, your position was assured. So doubtless, when Alexander brought his bride home to the Hillside Avenue house, he was considered to have made a match suitable for a Boardman; doubtless, too, the new Mrs. Alexander's family and friends approved, as the young man is said to have been very good-looking and agreeable and in short promising in every way, and the Boardman estate, even after being divided among so many, had been large enough for his share to be a comfortable nest-egg. In all their twenty-five or thirty years of married life they had only one child, a son; and Alexander died in that same old house on Hillside Avenue, at the age of fifty-seven or thereabouts.

If there is a certain brevity about these notes on Alexander Boardman, it is accounted for by the fact that this writer knows scarcely anything of him. Although the last ten or fifteen years of his life are within the recollection of my generation, he was not interesting enough to us to be known or remembered. For instance, I take it for granted that he had some business or profession, for with us every man works, but I do not know what it was. Indeed, for some while before his death he was very much broken in health and I believe not quite right mentally besides, so that he could not have been able to work anyhow. They used to take him for an outing about the grounds in a wheel-chair which the negro man-servant pushed, Mrs. Boardman walking firm and erect alongside; she was a homely woman in the face but of elegant figure and carriage.

Dick Boardman, the son — he was named Richard Chase

after the old Commodore — must have been about thirty at the time of his father's death. Everybody said that he was an unusually fine sort of fellow, and — this I do remember clearly for it is the kind of gossip that takes hold of a young person's imagination — that if it had not been for his efforts during the last few years, the Boardman name would have gone into total eclipse, as it were, blotted out by mortgages and other disastrous obligations. The Hillside Avenue property which was rapidly running down and had always been a drain on them instead of the rich source of revenue poor old Jacob had expected might have been sold up for delinquent taxes, all sorts of dismal financial transactions might have been aired in the courts, if Richard had not stepped into the breach, even managing to save out enough for his mother to live on in a plain way. He took nothing himself — did not need anything for he had a good position with the Fenimore Tile Company and was reported to be making money fast, and to be a "solid man." There must have been some truth in the talk, for a little later he married — one of the Everett girls — and they had a comfortable home and lived well and brought up two children, performances which require "solidity" these days.

The first child, for whom its grandfather's name of Alexander was in readiness, disappointed them — measurably — by turning out a girl. Not to be balked, they named her Alexandra against her grandmother's protest. "We may not have another one, and I'm not going to take any chances," Richard declared jocularly, yet in earnest. "You know you don't really mind, Mother." And, sure enough, Mrs. Boardman senior at once withdrew with a little gesture of her fine, slender hands, a little smile. Probably she did not mind; at any rate she was an adept in the art of giving in gracefully. Her way of yielding

left the victor with none of that subtle dissatisfaction which seems always to accompany victory. This and some other qualities, such as a complete indifference about what there was to eat, the management of the servants, and the cost of running the house, made her an eminently easy person to live with. "Oh, we never have a word. We'd both think *words* vulgar, anyway. But it's not *that*; it's just that Mother thinks just the same way I do about everything, so we have nothing to disagree over!" Mrs. Richard Boardman would say. "I think those mother-in-law jokes in the funny papers are horrid. *Nice people* don't behave that way."

The younger Mrs. Boardman was rather short, with rich black hair, and brows and lashes, clear light hazel eyes, a rosy complexion, dimples, beautiful teeth, and a figure of that suave roundness in youth which becomes, in later years, almost too round — an exceedingly pretty woman, in fine. She was Lucy Everett and all of the Everetts were good-looking. The next arrival to the Boardman couple gratified them not only by being a boy — whom they christened with his mother's maiden name — but by being an unusually handsome one; there used to be a laughing argument between the parents as to the side from which he derived this superior physical endowment. Richard would hold out vigorously for the paternal blood, pointing to the life-size oil portrait of Alexander over the dining-room mantelpiece, to the other life-size oil portrait of Jacob over the sideboard, to the silhouettes, the daguerreotypes, the yellowing photographs of dozens of related Boardmans everywhere in the house, in support of his claim; Mrs. Richard, for her part, could not bring forward quite so imposing a lot of ancestors, but on the other hand, she had a perfect arsenal of contemporaries, stunning-looking sisters, brothers and masculine cousins who might

have posed for Romeos. If the baby had the Boardman nose, he had the Everett eyes, the hands of this one, the feet of that one — so with perennial relish, the simple fun went on. Nobody ever quarrelled jokingly over the rival claims of the Boardmans and Everetts in Alexandra's case; Alexandra, sad to relate, was not pretty.

They did not live in the Hillside Avenue house, in spite of sentiment and associations. Richard's practical common-sense declared against it, and even Mrs. Alexander, though she had passed more than half her life there, as a bride, a mother, a widow, approved of the change, or at least accepted it with her customary agreeable reticence; to refrain from any sort of self-indulgence apparently cost her nothing. After its escape from the sheriff's clutches, and after an interval when it stood vacant with its great old windows boarded up, with broken slates and chimneys rattling down in the high winds, with grass and weeds running wild together in the yard, Richard succeeded in leasing it to a man named Thatcher who had a dairy-farm back in the country somewhere. Thatcher had made some money dairy-farming and now, it appeared, wanted to move his large family — he had ten or a dozen children, it was reported! — into town so as to give them an education and social advantages. "I suppose our old place must be the only one he can find that's big enough and at the same time cheap enough," Richard Boardman said in private. "We're lucky to get respectable people in there." By which it will be seen how much for the worse that neighbourhood had altered. However, the Thatchers moved in and dwelt with the old marble mantels and high ceilings, and splendid curving flights of stairs; and sat in their shirtsleeves on the old columned porches, and were not annoyed, let us hope, by the near proximity of the Little Miami stockyards on one side, and

the saloons and coloured settlements on the other. The Boardmans, meanwhile, found a smaller modern house on the North Hill, and it was there that Richard brought his wife and there that the two children were born.

There they grew up, also, if not under the ancestral roof-tree, at any rate surrounded by the ancestral belongings which of themselves amply sustained the patrician legend. Massive mahogany pieces, old steel engravings, Dr. Boardman's certificate of membership in the Order of Cincinnati engrossed on parchment and framed and hanging up in the hall, the solid silver service presented to Commodore Chase on his retirement by the officers and seamen of the *Susquehanna*, those portraits already alluded to, Jacob with his high collar and Napoleonic forelock, Alexander with his low collar and spreading whiskers, Mrs. Alexander, a pensive *grande dame* in black velvet showing her graceful arms and shoulders, with a lace scarf thrown over her head — this is only to name a few of the evidences of ancient distinction to be noticed in the Boardman residence. They came in for a good deal of admiring and interested comment from visitors and outsiders; the family themselves were too accustomed to them to think much about them, or at any rate to talk much; possibly too the Boardman tradition enjoined certain manners, certain attitudes of mind. In later years the only thrashing and the only severe words Everett Boardman could remember ever to have received from his father were incurred by some boyish boasting about the family inheritances which the elder Boardman happened to overhear. "I'm a Boardman!" said Everett pompously to the neighbourhood small fry, congregated on the front walk before setting out for Sunday-school. "I'm a Boardman! We don't have anybody but gentlemen in my family —"

And here Richard Boardman, who was reading the Sun-

day morning paper on the porch, laid it aside and rose up with a stern and chilling countenance; and taking Master Everett by the shoulder marched him into the house and upstairs. He gave the boy a grave lecture before applying the weapon of correction. "I am ashamed to find out that my son goes around blowing and bragging about his name and his family and his being a gentleman; I'm ashamed of him for doing it, and I'm more ashamed of him for thinking that way," said Richard. "About the cheapest thing a man can do is to bully a servant, and the next cheapest and silliest is to tell people he's a gentleman. I mean for you to remember this, Everett. Take off your coat, sir!" Let us not proceed any farther with this painful, this classic scene. Everett did remember, it is to be hoped profitably; he would sometimes recall the occasion with a laugh. But Richard Boardman, who used often as he grew older to review with tender amusement his children's peccadilloes and their punishments, never referred to this particular incident; he had been in earnest when saying that he was ashamed.

Except that one time, Everett, to do him justice, scarcely needed discipline. He grew up a nice boy, amiable, truthful, and of good spirit; he stood well enough in his classes — though not destined to set the Ohio River on fire, the teachers said to one another — and was always pre-eminently good-looking, even at the coltish period of growth. His mother was very proud of him, though, being a sensible woman, she heroically tried her best not to show it. For that matter, little Mrs. Richard was innocently proud and happy about a great many things — of herself, her enduring prettiness, her clothes, her house, her husband who was such a prominent man, so successful, universally so liked and respected, who gave her everything and let her do everything she wanted, of her boy, of her girl, even

of her association with her mother-in-law which, as has been shown, was amicable to a degree rarely witnessed.

The daughter of the house of Boardman offered, perhaps, not quite so much to be proud of as some of those other people and circumstances over which Mrs. Boardman junior was so set up. Sandra grew from an odd, Pierrot-faced baby who had a disturbing fashion of crying when she heard sad music or hymns, while she would crow and chuckle at "Dixie" or the latest rag-time melody on a hand-organ, into an equally odd little girl with a clear and chalky-white complexion, with dead black hair and eyes, and with arms, legs and whole body so slender as to give her a misleading appearance of frail health. In reality the youngster hardly ever knew a sick day; her delicately wiry frame had been dowered with strength and soundness by some pioneer forebear — or so the family thought. She had more of a temper than Everett; the children squabbled and made up as children will, honours being about easy as to who provoked the quarrels and who came off victor; neither one sulked or domineered, those difficult traits not being in their characters, happily. Like her brother Sandra got through her lessons creditably, but without displaying an especial talent for anything. Both of them played the piano by ear, and wore out the patience of successive music-teachers by that laxity in practice and study which this sort of amateur invariably exhibits.

"*You needn't talk!*" Richard would say, laughing, to his mother when she mildly urged the children to their scales and finger-exercises. "*They get that straight from you. I've heard you say over and over again that when you were a girl nobody could make you work over your music. It came too easy without work. You can't say a word!*"

"Well, and see where my laziness landed me!" retorted

Mrs. Alexander. "I'm a horrible example. I might have been a good musician, but I never got anywhere or did anything except play over in a slouchy way whatever I heard at concerts and places. To be sure, they didn't know how to teach so well in those days as they do now."

"You didn't play slouchily either," cried out Richard. "You played all right. Don't you remember how I loved to have you play me to sleep when I was a little fellow? Father would go out somewhere, and you used to tuck me up in bed and then go down into our old drawing-room and play — you used to play 'The Last Rose of Summer' with variations — I believe you made 'em up as you went along —"

Everett and Sandra exploded with hilarious scorn. The Last Rose of Summer! That fossil tune! *Good-night!*

"It was very pretty," Richard asserted stoutly. "And you played it beautifully, Mother."

"Seems Grandpa couldn't stand it," said Everett, grinning. "*He* went out!"

"But aren't we getting a long way off from the question of you two practising?" inquired Mrs. Boardman and smiled, too, not in the least hurt by their ruthless amusement, and turning the talk from herself as she somehow always contrived to do unobtrusively. But Sandra, looking at her, sobered suddenly.

"I'll go right away and play my scales for an hour," she announced, and jumped up and ran and kissed her grandmother impulsively, before galloping downstairs to the piano. She once confided to Everett that sometimes there was something in the old lady's face — "that makes me want to do something for her," said the girl, not too clearly.

"Do something? Do what?" Everett asked, puzzled.

But Sandra could not explain. "I don't know. Even when she's laughing and talking, it comes. I don't believe

she knows it's there herself — I think she'd stop it if she knew — I think she's that kind of a person. She wouldn't want me to be sorry for her. Anyhow I'm not sorry — not exactly — there's nothing for me to feel sorry about — unless it might be Grandpa being dead, and of course I can't talk to her about that. I suppose that's what she's thinking of when that look comes. I always feel as if I simply wanted to help her — ”

“Ho! I never saw her look like that,” said Everett in some contempt of feminine fancies. Very likely he was right. Sandra was a rather imaginative girl, and Mrs. Alexander's calm face, unlined even at her age, gave no sign to the ordinary observer of hidden fires or distresses past or present. In any case, Sandra divined that her grandmother was not of the temperament to demand sympathy; she was not at all sorry for herself, and did not ask any one else to be. Sandra once or twice thought — with a scared and apologetic feeling — that the older Mrs. Boardman would probably not care particularly even for comfort offered from On High, though she would accept it with the most well-bred manner in the world! Mrs. Alexander never went to church — though Sandra saw her reading the Bible once in a while — and never discussed spiritual matters.

Richard himself was a rather tepid churchman, though he gave liberally, irrespective of creeds; but Mrs. Richard more than made up for the two of them by the energy of her religious observances. Not that she was devout; she believed in Something hazy, remote, and — to speak plainly — not very agreeable owing to an association with that other hazy, remote and essentially disagreeable abstraction, Death. But if her beliefs were thus unstable, Mrs. Richard's convictions, on the other hand, were as solid as a rock. That only “nice” people went to All

Saints', that therefore it was her imperative duty as a mother to see that her children went there, in order that they might mingle only with "nice" children, and see and hear and be taught only things proper to and accepted by the "nice" class — these were opinions for which she would have gone to the stake. She privately thought that all the Protestant sects outside of the Protestant Episcopal were "common"; she did not know anybody in those congregations. Very good, kind people, of course; Mr. Boardman knew a great many of them in business, but *she* never met them anywhere.

She entertained the same prejudice against the free schools which our well-meaning communities provide for the education of our youth. Alas, they too were "common," according to Mrs. Richard Boardman! Fortunately her husband's means afforded the best private school for their girl — at least to the best private school Sandra went, whether her father could afford it or not. His wife had a hundred arguments to justify the extravagance. Boys being less susceptible to contamination from the "common" element, as we may fairly infer, Everett went hardily to the public school and high school thereafter without visibly deteriorating, we are bound to admit, in manners or morals.

When all is said, Mrs. Richard's small snobbery — if it was snobbery — was harmless; she never hurt anybody's feelings with it; she had been herself too well brought up, and was too kind and gentle by nature. The same might be said of the children; the atmosphere of their home would have made them "nice," whatever outside conditions happened to be. Still the mother had her moments of anxiety. She would sometimes remark with perplexity — for the thing seemed to reverse parents' usual experience — that she never worried half so much over

Everett, as over Alexandra. Everett's friends were all "nice" boys, sons of friends of her own, or people who could be placed as having entirely "nice" antecedents. But she never could tell whom Sandra might pick up!

"Look at that boy she is dancing with now!" she complained under her breath to another mother. "Do you know who he is? No? Well, I don't either. I never saw him before in my life. Mr. Matson told me when I let Sandra join this class that there wouldn't be anybody but nice children in it—he gave me the names, and I thought I knew them all. Who do you suppose he is?"

"Some new people, probably. There's somebody new coming up all the time," said the friend, who was of a more philosophical turn of mind. "It doesn't make much difference when they are as young as this. They can always drop them when they get a little older," she added—and if the last statements appear devoid of sense or meaning, let the reader apply to some mother in Mrs. Boardman's position. She will understand.

Mrs. Richard, however, called the child—Sandra was about eleven years old at this time—to her, when the dance was finished, and inquired who her late partner was.

"Oh, *him!*" said Sandra as ungrammatically as if she had not been a "nice" little girl at all. "Why, his name's Sam Thatcher. Hasn't he got the reddest hair, though?"

He had; he also had a square, stocky figure, abundant freckles, and a wide, wholesome grin. Mrs. Boardman examined him without favour. "Thatcher? I don't know his mother. I never heard of any Mrs. Thatcher. You see! It's just as I was telling you," she said to the other lady with a despairing shrug.

"He hasn't got any mother," said Sandra. "He hasn't

had any since he was a weenty little baby. He calls his big sister Ma. Ma Susie. Isn't that funny? That's her over there."

"*She*, dear, don't say *her*. Mercy on us, who do you suppose these people are?" Mrs. Boardman ejaculated under her breath in a tragic aside to her neighbour. She followed the child's gesture and saw a tall young woman, twenty-odd years of age, as square of contour, stocky and red-headed as Master Samuel himself, sitting patiently on one of the chairs at the side of the room, watching the dancers; she was not well dressed, and had on a preposterous hat all feathers and gewgaws — "for all the world like a servant-girl on her Sunday out!" Mrs Richard thought.

"I know a Mrs. George Thatcher," said the friend unexpectedly. "They've just begun coming to All Saints'. She's very interested in the Girls' Friendly."

"Oh!" said Mrs. Boardman, taken aback. "But it can't be the same family," she added in polite incredulity.

"No. This Mrs. Thatcher that I know is too young to be that girl's mother anyhow. She's just a young married woman — her children are little things."

"Sam goes to school with Ev," said Sandra, feeling somehow on the defensive. "Ev knows him."

"Oh, a boy can know anybody," her mother said a little impatiently; "but I've told you often, Sandra —" and no doubt there would have followed one of those sermons on social distinctions to which Sandra was accustomed, if Miss Hoffman had not most opportunely struck up another dance.

Everett, on being interrogated later said: Yeah. Sure. He knew a boy named Thatcher, only they didn't call him Sam, they called him Mugsy. Yeah, his name was Sam all right, but the fellows always called him Mugsy. He

could wiggle his ears. He had a dog that would eat sauerkraut — aw, it would, too, he'd seen it. Sometimes the fellows would buy a cent's worth of the old sauerkraut woman that came around, and give it to the dog just to see him eat — he'd lop it all down, and wag around asking for more! Some day they were all going out to Mugsy's father's farm, and shoot rabbits. Mugsy could shoot; he had the dandiest gun. Say, Dad, couldn't he (Everett) have a gun —?

“Did you say Thatcher?” said Boardman senior, coming out of a brown study. “Why, that must be the same Thatchers that have our old place! I think this George Thatcher that is with the Gale and Bemis Machine-Tool people is one of them, or some relation. Has this friend of yours got a whole lot of brothers and sisters, Everett? All ages, some of them nearly grown-up? Oh, yes, the older ones must be quite grown-up by this time. I believe it's the same people.”

CHAPTER III

SAM THATCHER'S forefathers did not come to this country in the beginning years of its settlement, and establish a dynasty — or, if they did, local history has taken no note of them. The first Thatcher of whom any one here ever heard was Steven B., the same one who, not much more than thirty years ago, moved in from his dairy-farm and leased the old Boardman house. Sam himself could not remember that event; he was a baby at the time, the latest comer of all the brood, who ranged in ages from fifteen-year-old Susie down to his own scant six months, and so the gaunt barn of a house was the first home he knew.

His mother did not regard it as a barn, nor did it ever occur to her that the neighbours might be objectionable. Neighbours of almost any sort were only too welcome to her, who had always lived at least three miles from everybody and everywhere. All her life she had yearned for town, for gas, sidewalks, fire-engines, policemen, noise, distraction, amusement — if churches and schools figured in the list, it was as incidentals; and now that her dreams and desires were to be realized, she was too happily dazzled to consider details. Moreover, the experience of spending money freely on the things dear to every woman's heart such as furnishings and decorations, was hers for the first time. The Hillside Avenue house afforded an ample background, yet scarcely ample enough, for the clutter of Brussels carpets, Nottingham lace curtains and chenille portières, the department-store etchings, the bastard Wedg-

wood and Sévres and majolica *bric-à-brac* with which Mrs. Thatcher's simple taste crowded it. Finished, it was a gorgeous spectacle; there is something saddening in the knowledge that she had so short a while to enjoy it. She died very suddenly of pneumonia the following winter before little Sam had learned to walk.

So there was poor Steven Thatcher with the raft of children on his hands, and the house forlorn in spite of all its magnificence. The widower, however, was a practical man; he had graduated, so to speak, from dairying into the produce and commission business in which his capital was now invested, and the new duties left him not much time for sentiment. He imported a distant cousin of his wife's, Mattie Phillips, from some little town up in Indiana, to keep the house, and presently everything was going on as before. That is, everything went on as before from Steven's point of view, and from that of all of the children excepting his oldest daughter. Susie had protested violently against the arrangement; she thought she herself was old enough and capable enough to manage the household, resented bitterly the obligation of obedience to this intruder, and tormented herself with jealous forebodings that before long Mattie Phillips would be occupying her mother's place in earnest. Not the least of her grievances was that she could not reasonably complain of Mattie's administration; Susie actually found it in her heart to dislike the other for doing her duty well, for making them all comfortable, and getting along cheerfully, patiently and good-naturedly with everybody! It was all "put on" in the same fell purpose according to Susie. She kept her discontent to herself, however, pride or prudence withholding her from confiding in any one, even in the other children, except baby Sam; he was too young to understand or betray her, and indeed used to bawl

dismally and squirm away whenever his sister expounded her woes, or wept angrily over them and him in private.

Susie might have rested easy. Miss Phillips was a trim, wide-awake, good-looking young woman with a fair education, considerable taste in dress, and judgment about money matters, and a surprising discernment in worldly affairs and the business of making the most of oneself and one's chances. If she had in the beginning any idea of settling herself as the second Mrs. Steven Thatcher, she speedily abandoned it in favour of having a house of her own and children of her own. Dead people's shoes are seldom a good fit; and besides, to tell the truth, poor Mrs. Steven's were as brogans, carpet-slippers, hob-nailed boots, compared to the sort of foot-gear Mattie meant to have. In a single year of town, she saw more and learned more than the late Mrs. Thatcher, good plain woman that she was, would have seen and learned in her whole life. The drawbacks to Hillside Avenue as a place of residence would never have escaped Mattie; even at the very outset before she had acquired the sophistication and begun to entertain the social ambitions of succeeding years, she had a sharp inkling that the old Boardman house was not a place where "anybody" would choose to live; she very soon found out who "anybody" was, and that she herself was "nobody." That last was a condition Miss Phillips determined some day to remedy. And as time went on she erected certain other standards as definite and unshakable as if she had got them by inheritance — like Mrs. Richard Boardman. In fact they strikingly resembled some of Mrs. Boardman's, on the surface, at any rate; Mattie expressed the same opinions about being "nice" and being "common"; she had the jargon perfectly.

But by that time she had become Mrs. George Thatcher.

George was a younger brother of Steven's whom the latter had taken into business. He lived with them for a while on Hillside Avenue. Mattie Phillips was then about twenty-eight and had been keeping house for Steven and the children some five years; perhaps she concluded that she had had enough of it, or perhaps with that unerring eye to the main chance that has been mentioned, perceived that something might be made out of George, who was a promising young fellow with a good head for business. She liked him well enough, and after due hesitation (trust Mattie not to omit any of the formulas!) accepted him; and they were married and went to live in a little plain cottage on one of the side streets leading off from Adams Road. George was all for a freshly-opened sub-division farther out where the new brick houses stood in rows close as peas in a pod and as nearly alike, every one with a cement walk and all the modern conveniences, including the trolley-cars thundering by momentarily. He could not understand his wife's preference for this rather shabby old dwelling — it actually had been a tenant-house on the Henry D. Meigs property at one time — tucked into an out-of-the-way corner among the big North Hill estates whose aloof and lofty neighbourhood made it seem shabbier still. But Mrs. George stood firm. It was genius!

Thenceforward the social ascent of the George Thatchers was sure and steady. For one thing, George made plenty of money — and plenty of money, sordid as it seems, must be recognized as essential to success in this sort of climbing. The astute Mrs. George spent it, you may be sure, where it would make the best and most effective showing. She had the proper clothes, furnishings, servants; she made George join the right clubs, and dragged him diligently to the right church, the right theatre, the right summer-

resort; she sent the children to the right schools, and not Mrs. Boardman herself could have been more careful to see that they made the right friends. At the end of ten years Mrs. George Thatcher had worked her way, with no loss of dignity or self-respect, into the circle from which nobodies and even anybodies are excluded; she was one of the somebodies. And by the end of another ten — though this is looking ahead — she was in a fair way to become *the* somebody. So much for adaptability and intelligence — or at least cleverness — and perseverance!

In the meanwhile, where were the other Thatchers? Steven made money, too; he was a man of force, a sterling character; but one may easily guess that even with money, no member of that family could achieve such heights as Mattie. None of them had the gifts, or indeed the inclination. Mattie herself, who was generous withal, and had ambition to spare, could do nothing with or for them; she tried elevating first Susie, then Delia, then Kate in the order of their ages as they became eligible. Susie was a flat failure; perhaps she was a little too old by that time. She would not learn to dance, and had absolutely no small-talk; frocks and hats from the most expensive establishments could not make her look "right." Besides which, she rebelled ungratefully at her aunt-in-law's interest, spoke of Mrs. Mattie's friends as "society people" with vinegarish disapproval, and in the end fled from their teas and luncheons and card-clubs, and went back to putting up preserves and sewing on buttons with a relieved zest. Delia Thatcher promised better, but alas, she developed "common" tendencies, to the horror and alarm of Mrs. George who saw her own hard-won position threatened. Delia was more than willing to dress, but she wore colours too loud, feathers too voluminous, heels too high; she went about saturated with perfume, saluted

young men by their nicknames to their faces, and spoke of them as "fellows" behind their backs. In short, Delia was impossible. Mrs. Thatcher politely but firmly gave her up, and Delia promptly justified her by going off and marrying a travelling whiskey-salesman by the name of Hengstmuller! Even the most liberal-minded will agree with Mrs. George that a travelling whiskey-salesman by the name of Hengstmuller cannot be imagined figuring elegantly in society. After Delia came Kate who wore eyeglasses, had taken the course at Wellesley and wanted to teach. Kate was undoubtedly the brightest of the Thatcher girls and if she had had the slightest bent for it, she might have gone far in the career in which her aunt tried to launch her. As far as she went she was a success; people were amused by her sharp little speeches, they thought her piquant and attractive with her auburn curls and turned-up nose on which her glasses perched daringly; the young men voted her "cute," took her out, danced with her, sent her violets and bonbons during all of one winter season. And at the beginning of the next one. Kate coolly announced that she had taken the position of assistant-instructor in Latin and mathematics at Martha Washington College for Women; and shaking the dust of society from her feet — in a fine metaphor — departed for that educational institution the very next day.

Mrs. Thatcher gave up again — for good this time. She never attempted to do anything socially for the boys of the family. "They don't need it. Young men are always at a premium anyhow," the shrewd lady said to herself with a laugh; she was not without a sense of humour. And in fact the Thatcher boys — there must have been half a dozen of them — all turned out well, made friends, and appeared with credit if not in their Aunt Mattie's circle, in other circles that touched, even some-

times interlaced or overlapped it. But none of them went to the big eastern colleges or belonged to the Country Club or did any of those eminently "right" things which Mrs. Mattie coerced her own boys into doing, so it is not surprising that she saw very little of them after they were grown. Naturally also she did not know the girls they married, though she punctiliously sent handsome presents and invited the young couples to dinner. The only one in whom she took any real interest was also that apple of his sister Susie's eye, Master Samuel.

When Mattie Phillips went to the Thatchers, Sam was a round, pudgy, jolly youngster, engaged in cutting his teeth unostentatiously and without any fuss over the operation, crawling about on all fours, and playing contentedly the livelong day. Unbeknown to both of them, he crawled on those fat little hands and knees straight into Mattie's heart. The baby was so wholesome, so good-natured, so attractively homely, so full of puppy tricks and gambols, that it would have taken a much harder nature than hers to resist him. At their first interview he "went right to her" without fear or shrinking, to Susie's inward fury; and the friendship was destined to endure though subjected to the severe strain of Mattie's quasi-maternal authority, which, however, she never exerted unjustly or in anger. She was a good woman; and Sam was a good, honest, manly little boy. Susie unconsciously did her best to spoil him with her irrational worship, but some bulwark of common-sense or right-mindedness in the lad's character protected him; and then, to be sure, it is not easy to spoil any one member of a family of eight or ten, be he ever so spoilable! There is too much give-and-take, too much live-and-let-live, too ready an administration of barbaric justice in such a camp. Sam did his share of the bossing and quarrelling

and fighting, and had to stand up for himself, no doubt; at an early date he made it plain that he desired nobody else to stand up for him. "No. Do' wan' Harry's choo-choo. Do' wan' no sings 'cep' Sam's *own* sings!" said he with dignity, and gathered up the train of cars which Harry had been ordered to let little brother play with on pain of being thought selfish, and went and laid it in Harry's hands. "Good work, sport! *You're all right!*" said brother John, beholding this scene from the august summit of his thirteen years, with mingled amusement and approval. And "No sings 'cep' Sam's *own* sings" became a family by-word. They used to tell of him, too — but Susie never liked this anecdote — that one day, after being observed a while in deep thought, he inquired of Mattie: "Which is my *real* mother, you or Ma Susie?" "Why, what makes you ask, Sam?" said the other teasingly. "'Cos boys has ought to be *diff'runt* to their mothers," Sam stated gravely. They all laughed at the time, but years afterward when Mattie Thatcher had sons of her own — and there was a rumour that the George Thatchers had a good deal of trouble with that oldest boy of theirs — she thought of that speech of Sam's with a certain wistfulness.

At twelve the youngest of the Thatchers was what is popularly known as a pretty good chunk of a boy; he was tall for his age, sturdily built, with an open countenance which as the young gentleman had now finally acquired the whole of his second set of teeth was beginning around his mouth and chin to settle into the squarish shape it would wear through life. It must be acknowledged that Samuel was hardly a model of masculine beauty, to the impartial eye; Susie, of course, thought he was the noblest-looking specimen of boyhood on the globe. It was at about this time that he fell in with Everett Boardman at

school. That circumstance, however, was not what led to his knowing so well Everett's sister Alexandra; we are too well advised as to Mrs. Richard Boardman's views to suppose for an instant that a casual meeting with her son would be a passport to acquaintance with her daughter. No, it was the discreetly active Mrs. George Thatcher who set events in motion toward that end, though she was not thinking of Alexandra in particular.

"Is Sam going to dancing-school? He ought to be sent to dancing-school," she said to Susie one afternoon when she had gone out to Hillside Avenue for the call which she conscientiously made three or four times a year.

Susie pinched her lips together in a fashion familiar to the older woman. "No. And he's not *going* to go. You're always thinking of things like that, Cousin Mattie. I believe you think dancing-school is as important as real school — or church even."

"It is," said Mrs. Thatcher, undisturbed. "If you want young people to know other nice young people and have a good time socially, that is."

"Oh, socially! I knew that was coming! You think society's *everything*!" said Susie, jerking the thread through her work with brusque movements. "Sam doesn't care anything about society now, and I hope he never will."

Mrs. George looked at her tolerantly. She knew quite well that Susie had always disliked her and been jealous of her; nevertheless she had a regard for Susie. After all, jealousy is a sort of left-handed compliment; and, setting that aside, she had the complacent pity of a married woman for an old maid — it does not matter how calamitously married the wife, or how happy and successful the spinster. "Poor thing! She adores Sam; she'd die to save him a moment's pain — and yet she'll stand

right in his light all her life without knowing it, if he or somebody else doesn't shove her away!" mused Mattie. But aloud she only said: "Oh, of course you don't want to make the boy do anything he doesn't like. Sam might not be a very good dancer anyhow; some people can't learn, you know. I was only thinking he ought to have the same advantages as other children. It really is not so expensive as Brother Steven probably thinks. Our little Georgie is doing so nicely. I wish you'd come to Mr. Matson's some Saturday afternoon and see the children, Susie. It's so pretty."

"Sam could learn to dance perfectly," said Susie; she flushed all over her freckles. "He can learn anything. And I'm sure father wouldn't grudge the money; I don't think he's ever thought about the expense. That's not his way. It never came into his head, that's all — dancing-school for Sam, I mean." But Mrs. George, wise as a serpent while apparently harmless as a dove, would not continue the subject; instead she glanced off upon servants' wages, cold-storage meats, the improvements in gas-ranges and a dozen other irrelevant matters, and at last gathered up her elegant skirts and wraps and departed without seeming to hear Susie's question addressed to her with a funny half-defiance: "How much is it for a term at Matson's?" Mattie smiled to herself as she went off along the rickety board sidewalk; she had twice the humour, insight, calculation, of the other woman.

In due time and not at all to the surprise of his cousin Mattie — the children still called her cousin — Samuel turned up at Mr. Matson's where he justified his sister's loyal beliefs by learning his steps readily and becoming, if not a star pupil like the Boardman boy, at least a very acceptable partner. Susie used to go with him in her neat, dowdy clothes, her square-toed, sensible, outlandish shoes,

her hats that might have been bought the day before yet always had the look of having come out of the Ark. The first Saturday she brought her tatting! "I just can't sit still and hold my hands for two hours. Doing nothing's the hardest work I know," she explained to her neighbour on the next chair, catching her eye bent on the darting shuttle.

The other, who was a tall, thin old lady with very white hair and very black eyes, smiled in a way that made her bony, high-featured face extraordinarily pleasant for an instant. Although she said nothing, Susie did not feel rebuffed; she was not much of a talker herself. She sat beside the old lady and tatted in a kind of silent companionship, through the rest of the lesson; and when it was over the other rose and gave Susie another ineffably charming smile and salutation, and went away with a little white-faced witch of a child hanging to her hand. Susie had remarked this latter during the afternoon for her sprightly dancing. George's wife joined her on the front steps, and at once wanted to know where she had met Mrs. Alexander Boardman?

"Mrs. *Who?*" said Susie, obtusely. "I haven't met anybody. I didn't know a soul there. Sam, have you got your rubbers on?"

"That was Mrs. Boardman you were talking to. I saw you talking to her. Did you just speak without being introduced?" asked Mrs. George, with a sinking sensation. To approach Mrs. Boardman — *Mrs. Boardman* — of all people, in that free-and-easy style!

"Well, I guess I must have. I didn't know her from Adam, but of course, everybody there is respectable. They always are wherever there're children around," said Susie with an ignorance and an indifference which the other knew to be sincere, monstrous as the fact seemed. "I

wish I had known it was one of the Boardmans, though," Susie said after another moment with more interest. "I'd have asked her about tearing out those old partitions in our attic. We've had the house so long, I think they might do that much for us, don't you? Goodness knows father's put in enough improvements without ever saying a word to them! We've hardly ever asked for anything."

Chilly horror crept along Mrs. Mattie's spine. She had not bargained for this when she subtly engineered Sam's attendance at Matson's!

"The old lady likely don't know anything about it, though," Susie concluded on further reflection. "Wouldn't do much good to talk to her, I guess. I'm going to have those partitions out anyhow. There must be a lot of little three-cornered places behind 'em, in under where the roof comes down, and I'll bet they're full of dust and dirt and stuff that would take fire awfully easy. It's a wonder it never has and burned us all down to the ground."

Mrs. George breathed again. "You ought to move, Sue," she said. "You oughtn't to try to live there any longer."

"Yes, I know. It's running down like everything, still — I'd hate to move. Mother picked out all the things, and they're all there just where she put them — I'd hate to live anywhere else. And where'd we get a house big enough to put all the things in, anyhow?"

"It would be hard," said Mrs. George sympathetically, remembering the "things" with a shudder. Her own taste was kept rigidly up to date. She herself had not as yet met the Boardman ladies, either of whom, by the way, would have been astonished to learn that they occupied in the eyes of some people a pinnacle which these latter would have moved Heaven and earth to ascend.

It would have surprised Mrs. Alexander and Mrs. Richard as much as it would have surprised plain, straightforward Susie Thatcher to be told that her Sam capering about yonder with Sandra was on the road to the same eminence, and an object of envy to the mothers of some of the other boys and girls therefore. Susie only thought that Sam liked that Boardman girl pretty well, and she was a homely little tyke, but a real sweet, well-behaved child and she certainly *could* dance! And it was kind of a pity that the Boardman boy should be so good-looking and the girl not; seemed as if by rights it ought to be the other way, a man's looks not mattering near so much as a girl's. With which simple reflections, Susie was apt to dismiss the entire tribe of Boardman, root and branch, from her mind; ancestors and connections, name and fame, money or the lack of it, were nothing to Susie; she was hopelessly unsophisticated.

As for Sam, it was natural that he should not trouble his head about such matters. He liked Sandra, and tolerated Everett, who for his part was for a while one of "Mugsy's" most devoted henchmen. Owing to the accident that Sam's home was bigger than any other boy's in the school, possessing a yard about half a square in extent with dense shrubbery and an old barn well suited to the purposes of Indians, explorers, bandits, circus-performers and so on, and owing moreover to its being in a neighbourhood where most of the boys had been forbidden to go, Sam was a very popular person, and his "gang" never lacked recruits. They were admitted with ceremonies involving the bandaging of their eyes, torches, incantations, tremendous oaths, descents into the bowels of the Thatcher basement and fearful incarcerations there. Everett went through this ordeal handsomely, and so came into full knowledge of the secret grips and pass-words and other

solemn boyish absurdities; and spending with the rest of the "gang" two or three afternoons a week there, he grew to knowing the place well, Miss Thatcher herself who gave the boys cookies and never seemed to mind their racket in the least, Viney the maid-of-all-work they had had for ten years, Hans Wagner the kraut-eating dog who had many accomplishments besides that and was a dog of parts, even Sam's father whom the boys would meet sometimes getting off the car and walking up the hill. Steven was beginning to look grey and care-worn these days; he was about sixty, but might well have been a hundred and sixty from the youngsters' standpoint.

Once in a while, of course, members of the "gang," even the captain, appeared at Everett's own home to confer upon some weighty matter, or merely in the ordinary course of fellowship; so that Sam's red head and amiable grin by and by became more or less familiar to the Boardman household. Everett's father accepted the boys' presence philosophically. "Now, look here, Lucy, you can't keep Everett by your side all his life," he said warningly when his wife shook her head over some of Everett's associates. "You can't dictate to him who his friends shall be, and you yourself would think he was a pretty spineless sort of a boy if he took your say-so about them. Girls are different, I suppose. But he's got to go out in the world presently, and who knows who he'll meet? Or what are you going to do about it, even if you don't like them? People generally find their level, I've noticed; anyhow, there're some things we can't help or hinder. This Thatcher boy seems to be all right; they're very good, plain people — not quite like ourselves, perhaps, but good enough for us or anybody, just the same. Can't tell much about boys, of course — I mean about how they're going to turn out. Can't tell about Everett, for that matter!"

But if he never gets into any worse company, he'll be lucky!"

So the Thatcher intimacy was kept up more by Everett, to tell the truth, than by the older boy, who in his secret heart was never sure whether he liked Everett or not. Somewhere under Sam's red thatch, there lodged the suspicion that Ev Boardman was "slick," in spite of the fact that he had never been known to betray anybody, or to cheat in a game, or to shirk any enterprise involving work or risk, or, in a word, to commit any of the crimes known to boyhood whose cave-man creeds have to be lived up to much more rigorously than yours or mine, oh civilized adult! Then why should Captain Mugsy have privately distrusted him? He did not know. The rest of the Boardmans Samuel liked well enough — that is to say, excepting Sandra, he had no feeling for them at all, one way or the other. Sam was too busy with his own concerns to spare much thought to grown-up people. He knew Mr. Boardman in the same distant fashion that the other boys knew his own father, and he punctiliously remembered to take off his hat to the ladies, having had one meeting with Mrs. Alexander which had served to impress these older females of Sandra's family on his mind.

The senior Mrs. Boardman was writing in her room one day when there penetrated to her the rumour of sundry *pourparlers*, alarms, excursions, first downstairs, then upstairs, then outside her own door; and directly an apologetic maid ushered in a thick, straight, square boy whom she remembered to have seen before about the place and elsewhere. This time, instead of a bundle of school-books in a strap, or a shinny-stick, or a pair of skates, he carried under one arm a shoe-box tightly packed and bound about with twine, and at his heels there sniffed and wagged, to the impotent indignation of the maid, a large, smooth-

haired, soiled white dog. Mrs. Boardman was not disturbed by the apparition; it was seldom that she allowed herself to be disturbed — or to betray the fact, at least — by any event, no matter what; had the boy and his dog been two South Sea islanders she might, conceivably, have viewed them with the same agreeable composure. She tranquilly laid down her pen and eyeglasses, and as the servant began explanations, surveyed these callers and was surveyed in her turn. The result, astonishing to relate, appeared satisfactory to both sides! The homely old woman smiled her transfiguring smile, Sam's freckled face lit up as spontaneously; Hans Wagner pushed in bravely and laid his honest, unpedigreed head on her knee. The maid uttered a scandalized outcry.

"He won't bite," said Sam reassuringly.

"Of course not," said Mrs. Boardman, patting her hand — which was so beautifully and delicately shaped that even Sam noticed it — on the dog's flat, wedge-like skull. "Dogs always like me. I understand, Maggie. That will do. Everything is all right, thank you. Your sister has found something in the house — something that belongs to us — that we left there?" she said to Sam in faint surprise. "That's odd. I never missed anything — but there is such a quantity of stuff when one moves. Think of its being there all this while — nearly fifteen years!"

"Might be longer than that," Sam suggested. "The carpenters found it when they went to tear out those old walls in the attic." He hesitated; and it might be taken in proof of the confidence she had somehow inspired that he blurted out with a kind of shy fun: "At first I thought maybe it was hidden treasure — like you read about, you know — I thought somebody might have stuck it away up there!"

"Nobody in the Boardman family, Sam," said Mrs. Boardman with amusement.

"No, ma'am. The carpenter said he guessed there must have been lots of things standing around the way they always are in garrets, you know, and these must have got shoved into the corner and walled up without anybody ever noticing them."

"That must have been the way it happened," Mrs. Alexander agreed. And she thanked him; and Hans Wagner sat up and spoke and shook hands; and Sam departed, leaving her with the shoe-box on her knee. It contained, alas for romance, no missing will, no papers incriminating anybody or clearing up anything, nothing but some unimportant and uninteresting old letters and a moth-eaten pincushion! But after that interview Mrs. Boardman senior never forgot Sam, and never failed to answer his salute with a very bright, kind glance from her ordinarily distant and reticent black eyes. Sandra was his only other real friend in the family; for not long after this date, Everett's interest in the Thatchers began to wane.

"Sam says 'ma'am' and 'sir' all the time when he talks — to old people, you know. 'Yes, ma'am,' 'No, ma'am' — just like that — just as if he were somebody's butler or gardener or something," he remarked fastidiously. "And he calls a person's people, 'folks.' 'How're all the folks at your house?' — that's the way he talks. It sounds so queer."

CHAPTER IV

IT was not until the next morning after the Exhibition that it became known what grave trouble had been visited upon one of Mr. Matson's pupils. Only a few people here and there noticed that Sam Thatcher left the place earlier than usual and rather abruptly. Mrs. George had allowed herself to be overlooked for once; she gathered up her youngsters and got them away hurriedly but quietly. The dancing went on; the carriages were called; Miss Hoffman put on her cloak; the drum-man loosened up his drum-heads, the blasé violinists packed off with their instruments, and George the coloured man turned out the lights. The performance was all over, and nobody knew that a certain other performance had come to an end, too, until, yawning down to breakfast, they read it in the *Observer*, on the left-hand side of the inner sheet, with the undertakers' and florists' and monument-cutters' advertisements conveniently ranged at the head of the column. Mr. Boardman read it with an ejaculation of surprise and concern.

"Steven Thatcher's dead. It must have been very sudden. Why, I saw him on the street just the other day. Sixty-five. He looked older. Well, well! There goes a mighty good tenant!" said Richard, sipping his coffee, and skimming on down the list of names.

"Does it say when it happened? Mrs. George Thatcher was at the dance last night, and of course she wouldn't have — not that it would make such a difference to her, but for the looks of the thing. I don't think those two

families were ever very intimate," Mrs. Richard speculated. "Did you notice what a darling little dress that little girl of hers had on? She dresses her beautifully."

These remarks being launched at the table in general, went unanswered; but after a moment Mrs. Alexander said: "A good tenant gone, Dick? Do you think the other Thatchers will give up the house now?"

"Hey? Good gracious, mother, I don't know! It's a little too soon to be asking questions like that, isn't it?" said Richard with his eyes on the paper. "Hello, here's something about it in the obituaries." He folded the sheet over with a great crackling and rustling, and read: "'Steven B. Thatcher, the well-known head of the Thatcher-Barnes firm, passed away at his residence, Hillside Avenue, last night at ten o'clock. Death was due to cerebral hemorrhage. Mr. Thatcher was a native of Clermont County, but had been a resident of this city and of the Eightieth Ward for the past twenty years. He was a brother of George H. Thatcher, at one time associated with him in business, but now connected with the Gale and Bemis Machine-Tool Company. Mr. Thatcher is survived by —'" And here Mr. Boardman, despite the solemnity of the subject, broke off with a smile. "Well, by George!" said he; "this is the first time I ever did know for certain how many children the old man had!"

"Don't forget that your grandfather had ten," said his mother.

"Well, but that wasn't anything in those times, mother," cried Mrs. Richard, defensively. "Nowadays *nobody* has those huge families, except Italians and people like that in the slums."

Sandra got up and went around behind her father's chair, reading over his shoulder. "Sam was there last

night — isn't that awful! He must have gone home right from the dancing and everything, and there his father was — isn't it ghastly, though?" Her large black eyes seemed to grow wider, deeper and blacker in her pale face as she pictured this sudden onslaught of calamity. "Poor Sam!"

"Must have been pretty rough," Everett agreed. "I don't think there's anybody there but that funny old-maid sister — you know who I mean — the one that wears those weird cocky-doodle hats. She's a bird!"

"Oh, don't talk that way, Ev. Miss Susy is *nice*. Of course she's funny, but still —"

"Oh, they're all very common people, you know that. I suppose Sam'll drop out now. He told me he was going to start to work pretty soon, and his father dying, he'll probably begin right off. If he does, he'll drop out. Fellows like that, that don't go to college or anything are sure to drop out — they get to going with another set, and you never see them again. I've often noticed it," said Everett; young gentlemen are frequently very wise, weary and disillusioned at sixteen. His statements, however, may have been true, a fact which would remove them from the class of mean and small-minded gossip. At any rate, it was impossible to associate anything mean and small-minded with Everett; he spoke with a fine detachment, equally indifferent and humane.

It was little enough thought that Sam, for his part, was likely to give to his place in society at any time; but at the moment he was too busy to think about himself at all. It seemed to the boy as if he never could forget the cold night, the long, cold, noisy, crowded ride in the street-car, his uncle silently gnawing at a dead cigar, the struggle up the hill against a sleety wind, the drunken chorus from one of the doggeries down below on the Avenue coming

to them in gusts, Viney's strangely altered face as she opened the door. The setting and the prelude were so sombrely dramatic, why had he not known what was going to happen, Sam wondered. He had had no idea of it! The house felt very hot coming in from the winter night, and there was a pungent smell of some drug — that was all that he noticed.

"Any change?" his uncle asked, as he began to take off his coat; in the very word and act he halted and he and Viney looked at each other, a brief and comprehending glance. She did not answer. Uncle George uttered a subdued exclamation, standing with one arm in the sleeve of his overcoat; he shook his head. "Well!" he said with a short sigh. Somebody came out of the parlour; it was the doctor.

"Father's upstairs? He's in bed, isn't he?" said Sam.

"Oh, go on up, Sammy, go on! She's up there all by herself! You go on!" said Viney, beginning to cry. Then all at once Sam knew.

There ensued days of that dismal, reverent hurly-burly with which we are wont to put away the dead. People came and went; the George Thatchers were most kind; the sons and daughters from all over the country wrote and telegraphed; Mr. Thatcher's business associates volunteered assistance in droves. At the funeral, the local commandery of the Order of Iroquois, of which Steven had been Grand Sachem, turned out in full force; there were a great many "floral tributes," as the reporters called them, pillows of violets, wreaths, anchors, and broken columns of lilies and tuberose. The choir from the First M. E. Church sang, and Mr. Binns the pastor, a young man recently arrived who had never met Mr. Thatcher, preached a moving sermon that lasted an hour. The conduct of the entire ceremony gave poor Susie deep

satisfaction, and probably caused Mrs. George Thatcher, that disciple of correctness and exclusiveness, to writhe in spirit.

As for Sam, he scarcely counted in anybody's estimation, one way or another. Though he did all the errands, and met all of the people at the stations, and saw to their comfort, and hunted up all the extra helpers, and notified everybody and gathered everybody together in the right place at the right time, and in short discharged a thousand small but essential offices without forgetting or mismanaging a single one of them — though he was so handy, useful and reliable as to be unquestioningly made a convenience of by all of them, Sam was still to the rest of the family nothing but a boy. His older brothers and sisters hardly knew him; he was diffident about raising his voice in their councils. Sometimes he thought that every one, including himself, was a great deal more important and busy than grieved. It came upon the honest lad with horror that he was feeling nothing like such a sense of loss and desolation as when poor Hans died. Sam had wept in secret over Hans, and even now his heart was sore for his old dog; he could not shed a tear for his father! His only real regret came with the recollection of that foolish to-do he had made about having a night-key; it happened on the morning of his father's last day. Sam wished he could take back some of the things he had said. But, after all, did it matter, he thought reasonably as he lay in bed the night after the funeral pondering these things, gazing into the dark. His father and he had generally been pretty good friends; maybe a son ought to feel differently, but he couldn't somehow. And anyway, Sam concluded firmly, the thing for him to do now was to get busy and take care of Susie.

The fact was in his rôle of supernumerary, he had over-

heard a good deal of conversation between the others on a subject that Sam at first thought with his severe youthful intolerance, ought not to have been brought up at such a time; in later years he came to know that it is invariably the staple topic; namely, the amount of the dead man's estate, and how it would be divided. They shook their heads over these speculations, and listening reluctantly he gathered that poor father never had been much of a money-maker; all of his profits always went straight back into the business, and in spite of that, it never got to be a really big business — just fair. He had had to work hard to keep it going. Why, that was the reason Uncle George got out of it; *he* saw there wasn't any future for it. There couldn't be more than a little dab all around, a few thousand dollars, maybe only a few hundred, when it was wound up. Of course there was the old farm — probably father ought never to have given up farming, or tried to do anything else, but he was using his best judgment at the time. They did hope Susie was provided for anyhow; if he had made any difference between the children, it would be in favour of the girls, and Susie was the one who had stayed at home with him, and never married. Neither had Kate, to be sure, but she could take care of herself — had for years past, the same as the boys.

And so on, and so on. Sam heard with an astonishment and dismay not caused by the revelations themselves but by certain unpleasant discoveries about himself to which they led. He had never supposed his father to be a rich man; the trouble was, as he now perceived, that he had never thought about their circumstances at all. He had taken his home, his education, his clothes, pocket-money, amusements, as he had taken the weather and the seasons, without considering their source an in-

stant. Disproportionate shame possessed him. He ought to have known better; he ought to have known more; he was nineteen years old, and might have been at work for the last two years; lots of the other fellows were. Well, he had wanted to, or at least had talked about it, but Dad and Susie were so set on his graduating; and since then — Sam rammed the statement down his own throat and found it a bitter mouthful — since then he had done nothing. That was the flat truth. He had always been going to do something, but meanwhile he had loafed at home, smoking cigarettes and reading novels and going out to see girls and taking them places, and eating three good meals a day, and teasing like a kid for a nightkey! He had even let Susie give him money; she had been giving it to him ever since he was little, just as if she had been his mother, and he had gone on taking it from her. She loved to give him money, looking upon him as a child still, but what had he been thinking of to accept it? Was that the way for a man to act? How much precious time he had wasted, and where was he heading? Master Samuel spent more than one bad quarter of an hour arraigned before the merciless court of his own conscience; it will have been seen that he took himself and his suddenly imposed responsibilities very seriously; perhaps it was as well he did. Years afterwards he could afford to look back upon that worried boy of nineteen with a laugh. "Susie would have made a mollycoddle of me — a regular house-cat. But poor old Dad died, and I got waked up. I waked up and I *grew* up right then and there!" he says.

It was Susie, the helpless, the unmarried, who of all of them knew where the will might be found and took the least interest in it. "Father kept it in his box at the Safe Deposit. The pass-word's 'Clara' — poor Ma's

name, you know," she told them, sighing. The instrument confirmed the family judgment; there was a little individually — nobody was left out — but the bulk went to Susie — "And that means Sam, eventually, of course," the others remarked privately, bestowing more attention on him than heretofore. His Uncle George inquired for the first time what he was going to do? "You're old enough to be at something, Sam. Got any ideas about it? What do you think you *can* do, anyway?"

"I don't know, sir," said Sam, truthfully. "Of course I mean to get some kind of a job, if it's nothing but sweeping out an office. Susie wants to have a little flat somewhere, and have me live with her, but I — I don't want to do that."

His uncle stared. "Why not? That seems to me to be all right. Susie has enough to live on and naturally she wants you with her."

"I'm not going to have Susie staking me to my board and lodgings," said Sam. "That's what it would amount to. She wouldn't let me pay her anything, and she'd worry herself sick over me. If it was I taking care of *her*, it would be different; I'd be glad to. But not this way. I've got fifteen hundred dollars of my own that Father left me, and I'll make that do me till I get to making something myself. I won't use it all up unless I get sick or have some pretty bad luck. But live on Susie — ! Not for me!" announced the young fellow stoutly, believing himself to be acting in the spirit of independence and unselfishness. What he really wanted, alas for poor devoted Susie, was to get away from the petticoat dominion, to be done with the petting and purring, the eternal small attentions, the petty anxieties. Impatience to match himself with other men in the man's world had belatedly overtaken him. It was freedom that

he was after, and he was not thinking of Susie nearly so much as of himself, but Sam, to do him justice, did not know it, so easily do we dupe ourselves.

George Thatcher was at once slightly amused and slightly concerned. "Well, if that's the way you feel about it, Sam —" said he, and broke off, as one who suspends judgment. "Only fifteen hundred dollars won't last for ever," he added warningly. "And you won't get it right off anyhow. Of course I'll settle everything up as quick as I can, but those things take time."

Sam's face fell. He had been naïvely expecting to get his money in his hand within a day or so, and to tell the truth, looked forward to the hazard of new fortunes with a certain exhilaration. But Uncle George was the executor, and undoubtedly knew whereof he spoke. Sam felt rather blank and foolish. "I didn't think about that. I know a lot about business, don't I?" he said, with a rueful laugh.

But Mr. Thatcher did not smile; instead he took his nephew's speech literally and coldly. "No, you don't know the first thing — but you'll learn, I hope," said he with a disconcerting emphasis on the last word, and stood a moment frowning and considering. Sam divined that the older man's reflections were not complimentary to himself. Indeed Mr. Thatcher was thinking with impatience that the boy had been lamentably babied; the youngest of all, and Susie ready to lie down and let him walk over her — it was natural. The other sons had all started out early and were making their own living and some of them even getting married when they were Sam's age, or just a few years older. "I guess I can get you a place somewhere. I'll look around," he said at length. "Have you tried at all?"

"I spoke to Mr. Boardman when I went to tell him

that we'd have to give up the house. He's going to let us off the rest of the lease. He's first-rate; he said such nice things about Dad," Sam explained eagerly. "He thinks maybe they'll want another man in the office, and he said he'd bear me in mind. He's great; he's a great old fellow — gentleman, I mean, of course."

George Thatcher grunted. "Old, hey? Well, I suppose anybody that's past fifty seems as if he had one foot in the grave to you." He paused and reflected again. "I wouldn't go much on what he said, Sam. He just didn't want to discourage you. Even if you went in his office, it wouldn't be the best thing for you. Boardman's got a boy of his own coming along, and presently there wouldn't be room for two of you, and that would be your finish. No, I wouldn't bank any on that prospect. I'll see what I can do. Now according to my notion, you'd better live along quietly with Susie and manage the best you can. I don't doubt you'll make good in time."

There now began for Sam that process of "dropping out" which had been forecast. For it is to be feared that young Mr. Thatcher's *début* in the commercial world was not exceptionally brilliant, or even promising. He was conspicuously unlike those gifted youths we are constantly meeting with in fiction who, without previous training or experience, can plunge into the thick of affairs, and not only hold their own magnificently but defeat their elders repeatedly in pitched contests of wits, resourcefulness, foresight and craft. They know everything, they fear nothing, they never make a mistake — except in sentimental matters, when they are invariably the greatest boobies on earth. Even so, they are sure — owing to some final prodigious *coup* — to come to a satisfactory explanation with the heroine in the last chapters. In real life we never come across these

Napoleonic boys; it is doubtful if we would sit down to table with them or allow them in our houses, their manners generally leaving something to be desired; and as this is a tale of real life, it will have to be admitted, I say, that Sam Thatcher did not belong to their class. Anything but! Sam was sanguine enough about his own powers; he fully believed that he had the stuff in him to do as great things and do them as easily as those novelists' young men about whom he, like the rest of us, had read so much. He believed it until time and the world "knocked it out of him" as he would say himself nowadays.

To begin with, it was obscurely disquieting to find how many bright young men with a high-school education but no particular equipment otherwise were going about in search of a job. At moments it seemed to Sam as if some malign influence had deprived every boy in the community of resources and driven him out to make a living, while at the same time it removed from every business concern the slightest necessity for a boy's services! "Oh yes, we've let some of our clerks go," he actually heard a prosperous-looking man saying to another; "might as well and save a little. We can hire 'em again any time we need 'em. You can go out and get all you want for thirteen dollars a week." It was the truth, as Sam knew, worthy of Shylock though the speech might be.

In the spring, however, he did get a position with the Williamson News and Periodical Company which he held for some six months, until, moved doubtless by the same considerations as the thrifty person just quoted, they "let him go." After that he was for nearly a year in a broker's office on Walnut Street, about which there is an impression abroad that the less said the better; it appeared

that he was not indispensable there either. There was an interval when he had no work; if history is not mistaken there was another interval when he thought he would study law, but upon trial discovered that he had no turn for it; in all it must have been close upon three years that Samuel was see-sawing about from one thing to the next. Then one day at last he went with the Victorgraph people merely as an extra salesman during a rush season, but they kept him on afterwards, and there, contrary to his own and everybody's expectation, Sam's adventures and uncertainties ended. He is with the Victorgraph Company now. He has been all over the world selling these marvellous machines, and has strange and laughable and sometimes hair-raising stories of installing Victorgraphs in Esquimaux igloos, in South-Sea palm shacks, for Afghan ameeers, Philippine dattos, Klondyke millionaires, the native Y. M. C. A. of Tokio, Japan, the Seventh Day Adventist Church (coloured) of Canopolis, Georgia. There is an especially glorious one in Susie's parlour with a case wonderfully painted and inlaid—"The kind they ask the trade three thousand dollars for," she says proudly. "Sam got one of those big artists in London or Paris to make the design. I can't remember his name but it's a very famous man. Sam knows everybody."

He does indeed, and has wound up the records for "*Sole mio*" (Caruso) and that celebrated fox-trot "*I like a chicken in the spring-time*" (The Victorgraph Ukalele Band) before crowned heads, and amongst the sands of the Soudan—all's one to Sam. He is always the same, though getting a little thicker in the waist now, with hair as red as ever, and laughing-wrinkles at the corners of his eyes, in which latter one may discern not a little humour and sagacity. "Why, just drifted into it

— had to have something to do, you know, and just happened to get this. I never dreamed it would turn out the way it has," he will say, and laugh and shake his head and perhaps branch off to one of his varied experiences, a Sindbad of the disc and needle. There is only one thing that he will not talk about: that fifteen hundred dollars with which his career began years ago; is it a coincidence that he seldom mentions that time on Walnut Street either? "Everybody gets bit once, I guess," he has been heard to say. "Particularly the ones that think they're too smart." And with a half-sigh, a half-chuckle, "Lord, what fools we all are!"

CHAPTER V

IT is not to be supposed that a great gap was created in society by the dropping out of Mr. Samuel Thatcher. The boys and girls of the Boardmans' set, for instance, scarcely noticed it; even Sandra herself who knew him better than most of the others did, and liked him, all but forgot him in a few months. The young things had too much on their hands to miss anybody long; they were absorbed in their affairs, going to college, going to finishing-school, going incidentally to camp, to the mountains, to the seashore in summer, to Coronado or Miami in winter, to Europe at any season; taking lessons in all the arts; worrying or being worried over about their clothes, their complexions, their manners; gay, anxious, careless, hurried, incredibly happy and incredibly unconscious of it. Everett went to Princeton that year, Sandra to a well-known establishment for young ladies, on the Hudson River, much patronized by Mid-Western mothers of Mrs. Boardman's circle. It all cost Richard Boardman a pretty penny, but being a parent is universally conceded to be an expensive business — more expensive, it has been boasted, in our country than anywhere else; and it probably never entered his head to deny the children such reasonable advantages. He paid the tailors' and dressmakers' bills, the countless extras, the constantly increasing allowances of pocket-money without a protest. It was only about the housekeeping expenses at home that he sometimes seemed to be concerned.

"I — I suppose you look over these accounts every

month and see that they are all right, Lucy?" he said gently; Richard never scolded, never found fault. "Things must have gone up a good deal."

"Gone up a good deal!" echoed his wife, in wonder at his obtuseness. "Why, they've gone up *terribly*! Everybody's talking about it. Haven't you heard them? We live just the same as we always have, Dick, it's just that the grocers and all of them keep putting more on the price of things every day. I don't know what we're all going to do if it keeps on. I don't know how I can manage any better."

"I know you try — I mean I know you manage as well as anybody can," said Richard apologetically. "But it certainly does seem as if it cost us a great deal to live, doesn't it? I only thought we might — well — cut down a little here and there —?"

"Well, I wish you'd tell me where," said Mrs. Boardman, still on the defensive. She looked across the table at him a little resentful, a little alarmed. It was very seldom in all their twenty-odd years of life together that Richard had called in question anything she had done. "Is anything the matter, Dick?" she asked, not without a tremour. "Is there anything wrong at the office?"

Her husband, detecting her tragic surmises, began to laugh, in spite of himself. How dear she was — and how absurd! "Great goodness, no! As if I would worry you with anything of that sort anyhow!" he said. "Everything's all right. Only we've got to be careful — we ought to save a little if we can — on the children's account, you know. Money doesn't go as far as it used to, somehow — or else we all of us want more. Things we used to think were luxuries are just the commonest comforts nowadays; and we won't ever get back to the old standards, I don't believe. But don't you worry, Lucy. We aren't

going to the poor-house yet awhile. I've always supported my family, and I expect to keep it up." Richard finished with humorous self-confidence. "Just don't let them overcharge you. Be a little careful, you know. That's all." And he took his hat and kissed her and left the house, Mrs. Boardman watching him away, reassured, yet uneasy. She wished remorsefully that she had not bought — had not had charged, that is — that set of new curtains for the living-room; she couldn't return them now, they had been up a week, and they were so pretty anyhow, just what she wanted. Why hadn't Dick spoken about the bills before? Never mind, she would pay for the curtains herself out of her allowance; if she couldn't pay all of it at once, she could do it by degrees, some every month. Dick need never see the bill; she had had bills before that she kept from him. He wouldn't like for her to pay that way; if he knew he would insist on paying the whole thing at once; but she hadn't the *face* — he was always so good about things like that. She ordered the remains of the roast beef curried with rice for luncheon, and sat down to the dish, cheered by her good resolutions and by this piece of frugality.

Sandra Boardman came out one season during the second administration of one of our best-known and most vari-ously estimated presidents, a gentleman who has arrived at an equal celebrity going gunning for big game in Africa, and for rival candidates here at home. It was the year of a financial crisis that kept many a business-man tossing through sleepless nights, drove new wrinkles by the score, and sowed grey hairs broadcast. Sandra's father did not escape; nevertheless she "came out," had her closet full of new frocks, and her party at the Country Club where her slim satin slippers twinkled along the dancing-floor with just a little more grace and spirit than any of the

others', according to her admirers. She gave the impression of being pretty, owing to a deceptive brilliancy of face, and to a very good figure, at once round and slender. Her father and mother were decorously proud, her grandmother openly and insistently so. "It is permissible for a grandmother to be idiotic — it is rather expected, in fact," the old lady said with a kind of cool animation. Yet somehow she contrived neither to be foolish herself nor to make Sandra feel foolish — the worst crimes which age can commit in the eyes of youth.

There existed, however, a curious sympathy between the girl and her grandmother. It was natural that Sandra should accept the standards and subscribe to the opinions of her elders, natural even that she should have very nearly the same tastes, likes and dislikes; during her career as a *débutante*, Sandra never gave anybody trouble by being daring or original or unconventional. The odd thing was that when she was beset by some social perplexity, she went to her grandmother with it rather than to her mother. Mrs. Alexander possessed the unusual gift of listening; and the delicate reticence which she practised about herself and her own affairs, gave one a profound confidence in her. Whatever advice she gave — never without being urgently asked — was always kind, practical, good-humoured and to the point; and she never made the peculiarly irritating mistake of telling the young people what they knew, or thought they knew, already. Mrs. Richard was not so careful or so astute. "Mother is the dearest ever. But you aren't afraid to tell Grandma *anything*!" Sandra would sum it up, in private.

Little Miss Boardman, without being noticeably more popular or more sought by the men than other *débutantes* — there were not very many that winter, whether because of the hard times, or from whatever reason — had a highly

successful season. Everett came home for the holidays, and, as it is by no means a drawback to a young lady to have a good-looking brother with charming manners — or to have a brother of almost any description, for that matter — Everett, all unaware, perhaps contributed somewhat to Sandra's success. The will would not have been lacking, at any rate, for the young fellow was fond of his sister, though unsparingly critical of her, her hair, her dress, her conversation, according to the habit of male relatives. When they went out, he was as carefully attentive as if she had been "*any* girl, you know," Sandra told her grandmother.

"I don't see why I shouldn't be as nice to my sister as to *any* girl," said Everett, amused, chancing to overhear this speech. "A person ought not to have two sets of manners."

"No. But lots of the men just drop their sisters around anywhere, and never go near them again till the end of the evening, and don't know whether they're having a good time or not. You know they do, Ev. You've seen Harry Dutton —"

"Oh, yes," Everett said dispassionately but with the effect of heading off his sister's comments. It was against his creed to listen to or to utter anything even remotely disparaging about another man behind his back, especially in the presence of women. He shifted the talk, dexterously enough. "That reminds me, I don't believe I can go Thursday night, San. I've asked Alice Church to go to this Midsummer Night's Dream performance. They say it's great. Annie Russell is Puck, you know. I thought I ought to do something for Alice, the Churches have been so nice to me, and I want to show some appreciation."

His grandmother surveyed his serious face with a smile.

"Praiseworthy motives, Everett! But after all, it's not exactly a penance to go to the theatre — not this time, at least — and Alice seems to be a very sweet companionable girl," she said mischievously, a remark which brought forth hot protest from Sandra.

"Oh, grandma, he's giving up the dinner-dance! Alice isn't asked. I think it's lovely of Ev. Most of the boys would have to be *made* to do anything like that."

"The dance won't break up until four o'clock in the morning, at the earliest. It was nearly breakfast-time before you got back from your last party. You will have time to take Alice home, and go on there afterwards, won't you?" said Mrs. Alexander; and though she still smiled, there was studious inquiry in the eyes she turned on her grandson. Sandra caught the expression and was moved to a passing wonder: "What made grandma so funny all at once?" It was not like her; she seemed to be trying to pick some flaw in Everett, who, on his side, offered no defence. He thought it unbecoming. Let his grandmother, or let any woman be as waspish as she chose; that was the part of magnanimity.

"I could if we had an automobile," was all he said in answer to the old lady's last suggestion. "You can get around so much quicker." It was not the first time the young people had brought up that subject. Everett had pointed out the advantages of an automobile again that very morning when he went to the office to ask his father for the money to buy the theatre-tickets. Mr. Boardman put off considering it until next year.

"Yes," said Mrs. Alexander. The look of interrogation faded from her face, giving place to her usual expression of pleasant and courteous interest. "A carriage is better than nothing, however, when one takes a lady out, eh?" And rising up, she crossed the room to the

old desk in the Mid-Victorian "Gothic" style, all over trefoils and pinnacles and openwork scrolls that stood in one corner, and took some green bills out of one of its drawers. She came back with them in her hand, performing the whole action with a slow elegance which both the young people watched with admiration, thinking how different she was from most old women. They were generally mere bags of bones, or bags of flesh, tied with a string around the middle! "I like to see you so careful about these small proprieties, Everett — acknowledging your social debts, and all that. I don't believe that young men think about those things quite so much nowadays as they ought to," the old lady said, and with some laughing hint about the high cost of living including such items as carriage-hire, she presented the money to him in the prettiest of ways.

Everett took it, flushing with pleasure and surprise. "That's ever so kind of you, grandma — but you're always doing kind things." He stooped over her hand and kissed it with a courtly flourish wherein fun and tenderness mingled. Between them, the management of the little scene was a masterpiece, if one recognizes the fact that giving and taking are for most of us conspicuously awkward acts.

The season ended at last; a girl cannot be a *débutante* year after year. The reflection had occurred to Sandra's mother more than once with a relief she would not intentionally have acknowledged. "I don't mind the running around with them, or waiting up till all hours, or having the house upset and breakfast sent up at noon; and of course one likes to entertain and get the new clothes for them, and see them having a good time. I don't mind any of that one bit, though I'm nearly dead now it's over," she confided to Mrs. Alexander. "It does

cost frightfully — sometimes I've felt as if we ought not to be doing it — but after all it's only once. Sandra can have it only once in her whole life; it would have been so hard for her to see all her friends coming out, and not to have had the same chance herself. Because you know how it is, Mother, if a girl doesn't have something done for her right at the beginning, she simply is *out of it!* She misses ever so much. Well, anyway, we've done it. Next winter, I suppose they'll begin and call Sandra one of the 'old girls' — that's the way they do, you know. I hope she'll marry before she gets to be one of the *real* old ones. Oh, of course I'd like her to have two or three winters of being a young lady; by that time they've had enough of it — enough of the wild racing around from one thing to the next every hour of the day and night, I mean. And everybody else is getting married, so they feel as if they'd better, too. I know that's the way I did. That's what makes me feel as if that were the proper way for every girl to do; have a beautiful time first, and then get married!" said Mrs. Richard, smilingly aware that these views were not exactly elevated, but ready to stand up for them as being thoroughly practical. Indeed, hers was the voice of every mother in her set; and if catechized, they would one and all have expressed the same sound feeling in the same rather cheap words.

That summer the Richard Boardmans took a cottage at Sag Harbor, and Sandra continued to have a beautiful time in accordance with her mother's code. There was the dearth of young men so often noticed at our summer-resorts, but Everett was with them; and the girls and boys boated and played tennis and danced with a zest that took no account of the hot weather, and it is to be feared not much more of the fathers of the families in the offices at

home with the electric fans going, and the typewriters clacking all day long. For it is needless to say that "the Richard Boardmans" did not include Richard Boardman himself; he could not take the time away from business to spend even a week at the Sag Harbor cottage; his wife was a little worried by his appearance when she and Sandra came back towards the end of September.

The treadmill of gaieties began again; new girls came out, but the "old" ones, the weathered veterans of twenty-one or two or over, did not incontinently withdraw into the background. Sandra and her set were scarcely less busy than the winter before. "They simply never rest, they never stay at home a minute. I don't believe her father has seen Sandra once for weeks — she's not up in the mornings, of course, and so seldom in at night. It's the hardest thing in the world to get hold of her even for a fitting," Mrs. Boardman would say in fatigued surprise. "There's always something. If it isn't just an ordinary bridge-party or a dance that somebody's giving, why, then it's the theatre, or a charity, or the Garden Club, or the Crafters' or the Players' or the Afternoon Musical. They can't seem to get enough to do. Of course we *went* like everything when I was a girl, but I don't remember that there was so much always going on for the young people. I think I'll have to take Sandra to Atlantic City or somewhere in the spring for a complete rest. She can't keep on like this."

Nevertheless she did keep on with all the others, sometimes refreshed by a stay at Atlantic City or elsewhere, sometimes not. That was Sandra's life for three years — four years — there came a time when she did not care to count up the time it had lasted, when she thought about it herself with wonder or misplaced shame. Misplaced, because she surely was entitled to the pursuit of

happiness as she saw it — we have authority for that from the mightiest document we Americans think was ever produced — and misplaced because she was not to blame for a system of life in the fashioning of which she herself had scarcely had a hand. The girl thought as she had been directed, wanted what she had been told it was proper to want, acted as it was the rule of her circle to act. No marionette pulled by strings ever executed its movements more faithfully or with less initiative. What would you have? She did not lack sense, character, heart; but the idea that there might be other ends besides that of being a “nice” girl, and having a “beautiful time” had not yet entered Sandra’s young head. Her horizon was so lovely a spectacle of rose and gold, that she could not realize its pitiful narrowness.

Among the younger ones who, by coming out year after year, gradually and inevitably reduced Miss Boardman and her contemporaries to the ranks of the “old girls” was, of course, Miss Julia Thatcher. Equally of course, she was the most successful débutante of her set; not for nothing had her mother been busy all these years. No matron in society was more firmly established than Mrs. George Thatcher; to see her with her furs, her diamonds, her limousine, her awesome butler, her smart house, who would ever have recognized the little Mattie Phillips of twenty-five years past, that went to State Normal, taught school for a term or two up at Corncob Corners, made her own clothes, and had only one new dress a year at that, and was not unskilled at the stove and washboard besides, before she came down here to keep house for Cousin Steven? It is doubtful if her daughter Julia had ever heard of that time — Julia, who had her own little gasoline runabout, her own little ingénue string of pearls, maids to trail after her, trunks upon trunks of Paris-

created millinery, frills and flounces. No wonder she was a success!

Sandra Boardman was a good five years older than Julia whom she scarcely knew. But the latter's appearance in society stirred certain memories in the older girl, and Sandra one day made an opportunity to ask her what had become of Sam? Lo, Julia could not tell! "He's travelling all the time," she said vaguely. "I don't know where he is just now. You know Cousin Sam's so much older than I am," she explained ingenuously; "and being away at school so long — and in Europe all last year — I haven't seen him for ages."

By one of those startling coincidences which we have all witnessed at least once, it was not three days later that Sandra fell in with Sam Thatcher himself, very much alive and considerably improved in looks over the boy she had known. It was one spring afternoon when starting for the Tennis Club she dropped in at the drug-store on the Adams Road corner for a nip of some stimulating beverage like lemon-and-ginger-soda, say. The drug-store, which drove a humming trade among the youthful residents of the North Hill, was opulently supplied with magazines, candy, cigars, letter-paper, tooth-brushes, india-rubber appliances, alcohol lamps, and even some drugs, as it were by an after-thought; besides which its equipment embraced not only a great deal of plate-glass, a handsome composition floor resembling petrified sausage-meat and an onyx soda-fountain all glorious without and within, but also over in the corner by the weighing-machine an instrument about the same size, elegantly finished in mahogany, with a placard on it setting forth that it was the new Electric Victorgraph. You dropped a nickel in the slot, and were rewarded by any one of a dozen ravishing harmonies, upon the pressing of the

proper button. The records were changed every week — the Sextette from *Lucia* — Alabama Rag — Nearer, my God, to Thee — Rogers Brothers in Panama — *Madame Butterfly* and so on were among this week's choice.

"If you don't see what you want ask for it!" said a man who was studying the list as Sandra entered. He got out a nickel and presently, sure enough, the obedient machine was making the place resound with "'Rastus on Parade." The man stood listening with a thoughtful grin.

"I should think that would draw 'em," he said, sauntering across to the clerk.

The clerk responded that it sure did! "Of course it's pretty hot right now, and there're not so many round as in the evenings. But gee, you oughta see 'em when they're waiting for the car sometimes! Bunch around the machine can't get their money out fast enough," said he, setting out Sandra's glass and providing her with a long-handled spoon, two salt crackers on a plate, a Japanese napkin and a five-cent check all with a single expert motion. "What's yours?"

The other was in the act of saying that he would take a glass of vichy, when his eyes quite accidentally met Sandra's in the ornate mirror that hung behind the fountain; on a sudden he stumbled, stared hard, then averted his gaze guiltily, and directly afterwards stole another glance while endeavouring to look as if he were watching the clerk. Sandra, for her part, had stared too, for the fraction of a second; she thought she knew him — thought she did not know him — said to herself that it couldn't be — decided that it was. This last was final; she was ready for him the next time he glanced her way, caught his eye squarely, and spoke frankly and smilingly. "Why, Mr. Thatcher! I didn't know you for a minute!"

He turned very red, and jerked off his hat, and came

up to her smiling too, pleased and confused. "I was sure it was you. You look just the same."

"You don't. You seem so much older, somehow."

"Well, I *am* older—" In these momentous words, interspersed with laughter, was the old acquaintance renewed. If there was any awkwardness about the encounter, it was all on Sam's side; Sandra was by this time far too experienced a woman of the world—her world—to show embarrassment in any circumstances. But the young man had scarcely spoken to a girl, unless in the way of business for what seemed to him years and years; he felt all at once that he knew nothing about them—nothing about this particular kind of girl, at any rate. For it crowded into his mind that though Sandra might look the same—she was in fact a great deal prettier, he thought—she was not really the same at all. She was "Miss Boardman" now, for one thing, and he was "Mr. Thatcher," and all the good old boy-and-girl times were done and over with for ever. She was speaking.

"It's so odd. I was asking your cousin about you the other day—I haven't seen you for so long—and here you are!"

"My cousin? Oh yes, you mean Julia. I don't see much of them—once in a while, that's all. I'm not at home much."

"She said you were travelling."

"Well, yes. I'm going and coming a good deal. Everybody well at home?"

"Oh, very, thank you. Is—are—er—" In spite of her self-possession, Sandra had to halt with a lost feeling; she could not remember who or what or where Sam's immediate family were. He might be married for all she knew, and might possibly resent her ignorance or forget-

fulness. But, to her relief, he answered at once without noticing how she had fumbled.

"Why, my sister's all right, thanks. She doesn't change a bit. Wants to run after me, and wait on me hand and foot the same way she always did when we used to be going to Matson's, remember? Only of course I won't let her, nowadays. Susie's getting along; she must be over forty." And here, as Sandra got down from the stool, and began to adjust her veil and gloves, Mr. Thatcher abruptly changed the subject. "Er—have a sundae, won't you?"

Sandra's acrobatic feminine mind had reached the conclusion from the first part of his speech that he was not married. No man talks about his sister when he can talk about his wife. As to the last it needed no great penetration or quickness to construe "Have a sundae?" as "Do stay and talk to me or let me talk to you for a minute!" His honest blue eyes told her that much for that matter. She hesitated.

"Strawberry or chocolate? Or maybe they've got something else?" said Mr. Thatcher briskly. Sandra gave it up; after all, why not?—even if her mother did pronounce it "common"? "Goodness, I'm twenty-three. That's old enough to know how to behave. And I've known him for ever so long—at least I used to know him. And it all depends on who you are, anyhow!" she thought swiftly, and sat down again laughing.

Sam was unaffectedly content. He would have liked to sit there the rest of the afternoon, eating sundaes, although that rich and sweet confection was ordinarily not at all to his taste. The young fellow had just discovered that his life was intolerably lonesome. "I've gotten so that I feel like a stranger everywhere, even here in my home town," he confided to Sandra, in the course

of a brief autobiography. "I'm everlastingly on the move, and never can stop long enough anywhere to make friends, you know. Then I come back here, and nearly everybody has forgotten me. Oh, I don't mind," he added hastily, anxious not to be understood as complaining of his work in which he was really profoundly interested, or making a bid for sympathy, which he would have scorned to do. "I like it, and I seem to be pretty well suited to it. It's just bound to be a restless sort of business, that's all."

"My grandmother says that everybody is restless nowadays — in business and everything else. She says *I'm restless*," said the girl, with some wonder. "And I never do anything. I don't go nearly as much as some of the girls."

"Maybe she's right, though. You've got to get up and hustle if you're going to do anything, or some other fellow will get there first. Not much chance for people that want to take it easy. I know *that!*" said the young man. He paused reminiscently. "Your grandmother used to be a very fine-looking old lady."

"Yes indeed, she is still."

"Of course she wouldn't remember me, but I do her very well. She always had a look as if she didn't choose to tell all she knew; as a boy, I recollect how that impressed me. Has she got that beautiful room still?"

Sandra looked at him surprised and questioning. Her grandmother had always had the same room at the top of the house, wide, cool and grey. There were bare walls, a shelf of books, the plain bed, the desk, the clock, two little copper candlesticks. Mrs. Boardman indeed imparted to it as she did to everything about her, her very gloves and garments, her own air of gracious reserve, so that the place had character, it even had something like

a soul, but Sandra had never thought of it as beautiful. She said so, adding, "I didn't know you had ever seen it."

"I never did but once." He told her about it, describing himself and Hans Wagner with a good deal of humour. "She was just as nice as could be to both of us. Nothing but a boy and his dog! I suppose that's why I've never forgotten it. I thought she was the most wonderful old lady, and that room was the most beautiful place I had ever seen. No fuss about muddy boots and paws, and nothing to knock over and break. One wouldn't ever feel restless *there*, I expect. When you're out in the world, you like to think about a place like that sometimes."

"I'll tell her you said that."

"Gracious, don't!" said Sam, taken aback. "She'll think I mean just the room, but I know it must be your grandmother living in it. Nobody else could make it feel that way, I don't believe."

"Perhaps not. There isn't anybody like her."

She rather expected that his next move would be to ask if he might call, and was wondering just how he would go about it, and preparing what she would say in return. But as they rose and started towards the street, Sam asked another question entirely different.

"What's Everett doing?"

"Why, he's looking around. He hasn't gotten into anything yet," Sandra explained. That Everett was looking around and that he had not gotten into anything yet were facts so familiar to her and so negligible that she was surprised again to observe the seriousness with which Sam took them.

"Is that so?" said he in evident concern. "Why, I thought he would go in with your father, most likely — if he didn't study a profession, law, or something."

"He did have an idea of law for a while, but he gave it up after he got through college. Ev doesn't care much about tiles either; he thinks he'll like some other kind of business better."

"Well, it takes a good while to get started at anything, unless you've had special training. You don't always find the right thing, right off. It's pretty hard," said Sam, still with a gravity that Sandra found inexplicable. Everett himself was not in the least grave about his prospects. "You remember me to him, and tell him I'm wishing him luck," said Sam earnestly. A moment later he was gone on the down-town car, and Sandra was taking up her road in the opposite direction, towards the Tennis Club. He had not said a word about calling, after all.

CHAPTER VI

FOR almost the first time in their history, the Boardmans did not leave town that summer. The season was as long and as hot as usual; everybody they knew departed to the Michigan and Atlantic coast resorts, to Canada, Colorado, the Adirondacks, but the Boardmans stayed on at home. Sandra indeed had sundry invitations to visit friends in some of these localities, but she declined. Her mother would have had her go; it was the girl herself who during the discussion of railroad arrangements, and the necessary additions to her wardrobe, observed an expression on her father's face that sent her to bed unwontedly thoughtful. At breakfast the next morning, Mrs. Boardman who had planned new dresses and accessories until she fell asleep, and even then very likely had gone on planning them in her dreams, began to talk happily about going down town to shop when Sandra interrupted with revolutionary words.

"I don't believe I care enough about it to take that great long tiresome trip and make the changes and all," she announced. "It will be awful in this weather. Of course it's lovely at Biddeford after you get there — but somehow I can't work myself up to going; I feel too lazy to make the effort. It isn't as if I'd never been there, or anywhere; I've gone to the seashore dozens of times. I don't care a thing in the world about it; it's not worth while."

"Oh, but Sandra, you'd have such a good time!" her

mother protested, in as great a disappointment, as if she herself were being denied the pleasure. "You ought not to miss it."

"I always have a good time wherever I am — I'm having a good enough time now," said Sandra. "I'd rather spend the money on something else, if there was anything I needed."

"Well, you could do that, of course," said Mrs. Boardman hopefully. "What were you thinking of? Painted furniture for your room would be —"

"No, no, I don't want it. I don't want anything!" Sandra interposed hurriedly. She began to laugh. "I believe you just want to go down town and *buy* something, Mother. I believe that's what you really like to do the best of anything."

"I generally get my money's worth, too, miss," retorted Mrs. Richard, laughing too. "It is ever so much fun to shop," she added so simply and literally that Sandra broke into fresh amusement.

"Oh, Mother, you *are* such a dear!" She jumped up and ran around the table, and seizing her mother's shoulders from behind, went through the process known to the youthful Boardmans as "woolling her around" — that is to say giving her a more or less rough-and-tumble cuddling. They applied it also to kittens, the family dog, little children, anything that could be petted or was at all cuddle-able, in short. Mr. Boardman heard the outcry that invariably accompanied it, and looked up across the top of his paper with an absent smile.

"This child insists she's not going, Dick," cried out his wife, ineffectually trying to defend herself. "Mercy, Sandra, do be careful of my hair-net! She actually prefers staying at home and roasting with the rest of us to going to Biddeford!"

"Do you really?" said Richard, incredulously. "You can go if you want to, you know, San."

"I don't, and I'm not going!" Sandra declared. She was in earnest; to tell the truth, she had once or twice felt, of late, that to be for ever "going" was the most monotonous business on earth. Supposing she did make this Biddleford Pool visit, Sandra could visualize every incident of it, the cinders, the heat, the abominable stuffy sleeping-car, the change at Boston, Marian meeting her, the other girls and young men; she knew beforehand what every one would wear, would say, would do, how they would picnic and go clamming and sailing; somebody would have a guitar or banjo, somebody else — or all of them — would sing; she herself would infallibly be asked to do some fancy-dance. It would be the same old thing over and over again; nobody ever seemed able to think of anything new; certainly *she* couldn't. No, she chose to stay at home where she could have her room to herself, and not be obliged to share — civilly pretending that she liked it — with who knows how many other girls, who would get their things mixed with hers and borrow them and lose them, and talk about one another or about the men the livelong day and night. She did not feel at all virtuous over the renunciation, but rather cynical and world-weary. "I've had so much of that sort of thing," she said; and self-occupied as she was, did not miss the shadow of relief that passed over her father's face.

"Oh, very well, if that's the way you feel," was all he said, and resumed the paper.

But Sandra could not put that look of his out of her mind; thinking of it, she saw or fancied she saw, some subtle change in her father. The difference in age between their parents and themselves seems to children so vast that a corresponding difference in appearance becomes merely

incidental. If any one had said to Sandra that her father looked careworn and much older of late, she would have answered in all good faith that he had always looked as he did now; of course he was old; when she could first remember him, he must have been already thirty-odd! He might as well have been a hundred and thirty, according to the ruthless reckoning of youth. Whatever alteration she divined in him, Sandra did not set it down to years. But various phrases about "business-worry" and "nervous collapse" floated through her mind disturbingly. They united and took shape, as it were, in a longing to ask a certain question, which unfortunately was precisely the kind of question that in the Boardman family would have been considered little short of indecent. Truly, her elders had never laid down any hard-and-fast rule about it; but that very fact, namely, that they never mentioned the thing at all, was more significant than any making of rules. Moreover, Sandra did not know whom to ask; that her mother should know anything about it was unthinkable; to go to her grandmother might prove nearly as futile. Sandra was sure that, in accordance with their creed, they had never allowed themselves to touch, even ever so lightly on the subject. "In their day women weren't supposed to know anything about money or business. They can't change themselves now," thought the girl. There remained Everett, but to ask him would be worse than asking their father; he would be more shocked and if he did not know he would hate to have to confess it to her. Thus Sandra reasoned, showing by the way some little discernment. In the end she went to Richard, to headquarters. It took courage.

"Daddy, do you mind telling me something?"

"I suppose not. That is, if it's something I know something about," said Mr. Boardman in the tone he had

adopted when Sandra, at fourteen, used to spread her algebra problems before him. "What is it?"

Sandra braced herself and let the bolt fall. "How much have we got to live on?"

It was out! She stood convicted of the ineffable bad taste, the vulgarity, if you choose, of wanting to know the size of their income, and by inference what was done with it! Her father, however, did not seem horrified; perhaps he was too astonished. After an instant of blank staring, he ejaculated, "How much have we—! What under the sun put that into your head?"

"I—I just thought I'd like to know," stammered Sandra in dire confusion.

There was another profound pause. Then Richard said kindly—in his kindness he carefully looked away from her scarlet face, so as not to see her embarrassment—"What is the matter, Alexandra? Haven't you—er—that is—haven't you quite enough to spend? Is there one of those dreadful, terrorizing bills from Madame What's-her-name hanging over you? Never mind, it will be all right. I know you can't help it sometimes—"

"No, no, it's nothing like that. I haven't anything—I mean I don't owe anybody—"

"You're sure about that?" asked her father, knowingly and humorously. "No bills, hey? Not even a little teeny-weeny one for a hat or something?" He got out a cigar, and clipped the end off it, looking at her from under his eyebrows with smiling slyness, mimicking her fondly. "Sure?"

"Yes, I'm sure. There! I mean it!" said the girl almost crossly. She had expected the episode to be serious, had approached it with shrinking, if not fear; to have it degenerate into farce somehow put her out of countenance. And her father was now smiling with the

open and shameless amusement that women find so vexatious.

"Well then," said he, reducing his features suddenly to an owl's gravity; "why this sudden interest in the financial status?"

"I just felt as if I'd like to know," Sandra repeated helplessly, conscious of something ineffective about her appeal. It was as if she had addressed her father in some language unknown to him. She tried again earnestly, though still apologetically. "It seemed to me I — I ought to be told something about — about things like that, you know, Dad —"

He cut her short good-naturedly, glancing at his watch. "Oh, pahaw, you don't need to bother your head over what we have to live on. You couldn't understand even if I tried to explain — a young girl like you! Call up and ask the exchange for the exact time, will you, please, Sandra? I believe I'm slow."

"I could understand as well as Ev, if I *am* a girl," Sandra objected, lingering. "I'm older than he is, and Ev's never had anything to do with business either."

Mr. Boardman gave a kind of regretful laugh. "I'm afraid that's true, San. I declare I sometimes wish Everett would go off and fall in love with some nice girl! If he wanted to get married, it might put some ambition into him. But *you* don't need to take any measures of that kind," he added hastily, half smiling, half sober. "Well now, are you going to get me the correct time?"

She obeyed baffled, vaguely reassured, yet vaguely dissatisfied. It was not that she was really anxious about their "financial status" as Mr. Boardman phrased it. Sandra could not help knowing that they were not so well off as the George Thatchers, for instance, or a dozen other people she could name, but what of that? "Mother and

Grandma and I aren't pining away for gold vanity-cases and ermine stoles and butlers and chauffeurs and orchids and all that," said Sandra to herself with a laugh. They were reasonable. But being so reasonable, why could not her father have answered her? What did he think would happen if she knew — to put it grossly — how much he made a year? She could be trusted not to run around telling everybody in town. And as to explanations, a few figures were all she wanted; she had not asked how the money was made, but how much there was of it. Sandra was willing to allow that "business" was a highly recondite matter which she could not possibly grasp, but she knew that two and two make four, the girl thought with a little pique. Instead of meeting her question simply, he must go chasing off — these were Sandra's own words — after the notion that she was in trouble with the dressmaker, and was trying to break it to him gently. She indignantly told herself that she was above any such cheap and childish devices, and Daddy ought to know it by this time. She never had tried to sneak out of anything, or to lay the blame on somebody else, or to blarney him with soft words. But his first idea had been to set her mind at rest, to keep her from worrying; and then when he found out the real cause of her seriousness, instead of setting her mind at rest, or keeping her from worrying, he had laughed! His behaviour aroused in her two warring impulses; to shake him and to hug him. He was so generous, so forbearing, so infinitely good — and so exasperating.

He had let fall a word about Everett, though, that manifestly came from the heart. Whatever their means, there could not be enough to keep Everett in idleness, Sandra reflected with a puckered brow. If anybody in the family had a right to leisure, it was Dad, not Everett. Somehow she had not thought about it before, but now

the fact thrust itself upon her that Everett *was* idle. Idle was the word. He was not doing anything; they were so accustomed to seeing him do nothing during vacations, that they had forgotten he had been out of college a year and a half. She recalled the look on Sam Thatcher's face when they had spoken of her brother with sudden illumination. Sam had viewed Everett's jobless estate with grave sympathy, and had sent him what was evidently meant for a cheering and heartening message — the circumstance had certain ironical aspects which Sandra shrank from acknowledging even to herself. The girl was invaded by a sense of personal responsibility which her saner judgment told her was unreasonable, yet which she could not shake off. It was in nowise her fault that Everett was without a position; that she could do nothing towards sharing or lightening her father's burdens, he himself had made plain. Yet even while reminding herself of these facts, Sandra felt upon her a formless desire to account for herself in some way, to vindicate her own existence. The difficulty was that she did not know what she ought to do, or could do, or wanted to do; for the first time the harness of class and sex restrictions she had worn from her cradle, chafed. "If I had been a boy, I'd have been of some use. Dad would have *let* me!" she thought rebelliously. But she must remain in her sphere of ornament, of insignificant joys, varied by insignificant cares. They made her eat jam, when she would just as lief have dined off of plain bread and butter. The jam diet had always suited her mother, therefore it must suit her. "Well, of course, *Mother* —!" Sandra said to herself tolerantly.

The mood passed; it was a Jonah's-gourd sort of growth, too exotic to the Boardman zone to flourish there long. But it passed all the quicker because about this time

Everett did actually get something to do at last. A friend of his father's gave the young man a place in his office. Although the monthly salary could be expressed in two figures, neither of them among the biggest, there was the prospect of advancement, and at any rate one must make a beginning somewhere, somehow. Mr. Boardman was perhaps both relieved and hopeful, although he preserved the appearance of humorous indifference characteristic of the American father. The delight of the women of the family, on the other hand, was almost too great and too openly voiced to be complimentary; it moved Everett himself with a kind of annoyed amusement.

"Why, it isn't anything — it's just until I get something better," he expostulated. "For Heaven's sake don't act as if I'd just been appointed to the Cabinet! And besides if you make such a fuss about it, people will begin to think I was going to the dogs."

"Oh, but we don't make a fuss about it to outsiders, Everett. That wouldn't be nice, and it always sounds so silly. You know I wouldn't do anything like that," said his mother, a little hurt. "You surely don't mind our taking an interest and being pleased."

"Of course not — only I'm afraid you'll forget and give yourselves away some time. Now you look out, or I'll come over there and wool you around!" the young fellow threatened her in mock ferocity. "And you ought to remember," he added with a self-respecting humbleness that became him well, "that this is all Mr. Arnold. He knows that he's not getting any prize in me. He's just doing it on Dad's account."

Mrs. Richard looked troubled. "Yes, I know. I wish I could think of some more tactful way to show him that we appreciate it. You thanked him, of course, Everett, but just what did you say?"

The father and son exchanged a glance. "Oh, I — I guess Mr. Arnold knows how I feel, Mother," said Everett, shrinkingly. "I guess he understands."

"Probably the best way for Everett to show his appreciation will be for him to make good in the position, Lucy," said Mr. Boardman, in his gentle way. "I don't think you need to do anything."

She looked from one of them to the other silenced, and rather awed. The proposal she was about to make to invite the Arnolds to dinner, died on her lips; a moment before she had been considering it with some complacency as a very nice little attention to show them, particularly as it necessitated real effort on her part. For she would naturally have to call on Mrs. Arnold beforehand; they were quiet people whom Mrs. Richard Chase Boardman had never known, never even met or seen, but they must be familiar enough with society to realize that a visit from her was a proper and gracious thing — a nice thing, in short, to do. Now, however, something in the manner of her two men defeated the plan; somehow it would not do. The good, sweet woman felt herself rebuked, she could not have said how or why. Sandra thought herself wiser; as usual she confided her views privately to her grandmother.

"Men don't like to have any fuss made over a thing like that, I don't believe," she remarked sagely. "It always seems as if they could be friends and could do a lot of things for each other, make big sacrifices even, without saying a word. Women want to tell everybody; they want to have what they do noticed. They're terribly petty."

"All except you and me, eh?" said the old lady mischievously.

But Sandra would not joke. "You know it's so, grand-

ma. Of course it's not as bad as it used to be. We've learned a lot, and we've gotten all over those idiotic ideas about having to stay at home and do fancy-work, and look as if we never ate anything, and thinking it immodest to mention your own body, or know anything about it. We've gotten all over that —"

"We certainly have!" said Mrs. Alexander with whimsical enthusiasm. "Nowadays all you young women seem to be most astonishingly and outspokenly *aware*."

"Aware? How do you mean?"

"Just *aware*," her grandmother repeated composedly. "I think that word describes your generation of girls better than any I know."

"Well, it's more sensible than not knowing anything," cried Sandra with some warmth, glimpsing the other's meaning. "Or pretending not to know anything. That was the funniest notion! Pretending to be ignorant and helpless because it was pretty and womanly and all that!"

"Yes. We don't pretend to be helpless any more; we pretend to be cultured," said Mrs. Boardman. "One can hardly get along without pretending a little."

Sandra let that suggestion pass, perhaps not quite understanding it; her grandmother not infrequently threw out odd little dry speeches that seemed not to have much meaning. Besides, the girl was absorbed in her speculations just now; she went on talking earnestly.

"Do you know, I believe there always have been women who weren't that useless, molly-coddle kind; who were go-ahead and — and progressive, you know, and had plenty of sense and could take care of themselves, even in the old days. There always must have been *some* women like that — maybe just as many as there are now, only they didn't have our chances to show it."

"Oh, yes. We used to call them strong-minded," said

Mrs. Alexander, with an innocence which, however, by no means deceived the younger woman. "I have a dim general impression that they all wanted to cut their hair short and wear trousers and run for the presidency —"

"You *will* make fun," said Sandra reproachfully; "you know that's not at all the kind of person I meant. Those women were just freaks."

"Not at all, my dear. They were the straws which show which way the wind blows."

"Why, you don't think we'll all be doing like that after a while?"

"Who knows?" said the old lady with a Gallic movement of her still shapely shoulders, a Gallic smile charged with amiable cynicism, liberality and patience. "And why not? I have seen so many complete reversals of popular opinions and ideals and ways of thought in my time — so many social superstitions overthrown, so many others built up. It seems scarcely worth while to question anything, or to be shocked about anything, any more."

Sandra contemplated her silently. "You're wonderfully modern, grandma," she said after a while, abruptly. "Ever so much more so than mother, and yet she's younger. Mother would be ready to fly to pieces at the idea of any of us doing anything the least bit out of the way — against the rules, you know. She'd die rather than break them. And the funny thing is that the kind of rules they are, whether good ones or bad ones, doesn't make any difference to her! If it was in the rules that a lady must swear, why, mother would swear like a drayman, and would be after me to make me swear, too —!"

"Oh, come, now, Sandra —"

"You know she would, grandma. If it's 'the thing,' it's all right for mother. If it's 'done,' why, it might as well be one of the Ten Commandments. Well, I must

say," Sandra interpolated generously: "it's great to have somebody around that *is* that way, because they always know exactly what to do, no matter what comes up. I mean they always do the right thing, the tactful thing, you know. Mother *never* makes a mistake. I remember my first year out, it was perfectly fine to have mother to go to, because every now and then something would happen, and I wouldn't know quite what to do, and mother could always tell me. She's a wonder, that way."

If Mrs. Alexander wanted to laugh at this ingenuous tribute, she restrained it with a consideration which might of itself have been a small lesson in good breeding. "Your mother has had a great deal of social experience," was all she said.

"Well, so have you, grandma. You never make any mistakes either. But you aren't quite so — well — hide-bound, you know, as mother. You don't mind people breaking loose once in a while."

This time the old lady did laugh outright. "Oh, don't I? If you will just define 'breaking loose' for me —?"

"Oh, I don't mean anything like running off from your husband or any low business like that — all in the papers and everybody talking!" said Sandra, a little out of patience. "I mean — what is it?"

"Nothing. Go on."

"Oh, I thought you spoke. What I mean is you don't mind a person's being original, or doing something that isn't 'done,'" said Sandra, laying rather scornful stress on the last word. "For instance, that time I had a Spanish costume and danced the cachucha at one of those old exhibitions, don't you remember my getting Mademoiselle to paint me all up, and how mother just *gave* it to me afterwards? She thought the paint was awful, and she

thought the way I danced was awful, and the whole thing was awful! *You* didn't mind one bit."

"Well — er — I don't know — I probably didn't want to say anything —" Mrs. Alexander began, somewhat taken aback.

"Of course not. You realized that I was just trying to — to enter into the character, you know. I wanted to be — well — artistically sincere," said the girl, hesitating and colouring. "I know that sounds ridiculously affected and — and high-brow," she went on with a diffident laugh. "But it was really so. Only imagine trying to make mother see that! She *can't*, that's all. You're different; you understand. Nobody ever did exactly that sort of artistic thing when you were young; they didn't call dancing one of the arts at all, I suppose. But that doesn't keep you from thinking about it in a *modern* way, the way people think nowadays. It's splendid to be so large-minded and — and *emancipated*."

The emancipation was, perhaps, not quite so complete as Sandra fancied. Hearing her, Mrs. Boardman sat divided between amusement, uneasiness, a sneaking satisfaction in the girl's verdict on herself qualified by sympathy for her mother thus judged and dismissed offhand. The old lady was acute enough to recognize every one of these emotions, and surveyed them inwardly with caustic mirth. She found herself not so "modern" but that these theories and this "artistic" patter indefinitely disturbed her; what ideas were milling around in the child's head? One could never guess what young people might be up to nowadays. But after all, the world was theirs; their lives were theirs; and they must weather through by themselves, come what, come may!

CHAPTER VII

YOUNG Everett Boardman did not at once display the turn for affairs possessed by his great-grandfather, pioneering old Jacob, or by his own father Richard; even had he been stimulated in accordance with the latter's whimsical wish by falling in love and wanting to get married, it might not have operated to make a keen business man out of him. But there is no telling for Everett did not fall in love; he worked along contentedly, doing his exact share, no more and no less, as regular in his habits as the oldest and most settled man in the office, from whom, however, he differed conspicuously by being much more of an ornament. Young Boardman was one of the best looking and the best dressed young fellows to be seen on "the Street"! he had very pleasant manners, plenty of fun, a manly liking for sport, an invulnerable integrity — he had, in short, so many good qualities that it was impossible to believe he would not presently develop one or two more.

"Give the boy a chance. He'll find himself after a while. Of course he's a little slow and backward and lacks push and initiative and doesn't seem to know what he's here for, or to take all the interest he ought to; but that's natural, he's so new to it. I'd just as lief have him that way as like some of these fresh lads that after they've been in the office a week, come breezing around telling you how to run the business and just where you're making mistakes and losing money. I've seen that kind, too," said Mr. Arnold, good-naturedly. He became very fond of the young man, liking him for his good looks, his defer-

ence to his elders, his decent and cleanly character, and finally, or perhaps first of all for being the son of his father for whom Mr. Arnold entertained a great friendship and respect. "Everett'll come out all right as soon as he gets really started. It seems to take these college-boys longer than the others. They have to find out that all this Greek and trigonometry they've been stuffing up for four years isn't going to get 'em anything, and there isn't any professor around to mark their papers and tell them where they stand, and I expect they feel kind of surprised and bothered, and don't know how to take hold. College education is a good thing, of course, but it isn't practical. It could be made practical, I believe, but they'd have to run the colleges along other lines from what they do now," said Mr. Arnold, who was not a college-boy himself — far from it! He began his career at the age of fourteen as elevator-boy in the old Masonic Temple Building, and had pursued it with energy and success up to the present time unhampered by much schooling of any kind, except that bestowed gratis by years and years, experience and hard work.

Everett liked him, too — liked him well enough, that is, though he sometimes wished that Mr. Arnold would be more careful about taking off his hat when women came into the office; and gave the family at home an imitation of the "boss" getting something to eat at a quick-lunch counter and the way he used his knife and fork that sent Mrs. Richard and Sandra into fits of laughter, and even drew an involuntary grin from Richard, who disapproved of the exhibition. He thought the head of a big business and a man to whom Everett was personally indebted should be secure from this sort of ridicule; though the young man's humour was without malice and he exercised it after the same fashion on everybody,

high or low, visiting magnates, his brother clerks, those in adjoining offices, the girl stenographers, the messenger-boys, the very janitor and scrubwomen. "You see a funny job-lot of people in business," he reported, wagging his head. "*I* don't know where they all come from. You never meet them anywhere else. You can't imagine what their homes are like. Very nice respectable people, of course, all of them," he added quickly and generously. "And by the way," said Everett, his thoughts evidently leading him in a natural sequence from one group of "funny" people to another — "by the way, whom do you think I ran into today, Sandra? Why, Sam Thatcher, of all men in the world! Remember Sam? Big boy with red hair and freckles. They used to live in our old house."

"I remember him. He's Julia Thatcher's cousin," said Sandra, rather shortly. Something in Everett's manner grated on her. He would not speak of Julia in that tone as if she belonged to the job-lot of nonentities, she thought almost resentfully, and brought forward the relationship in Sam's defence, as it were. But Everett only laughed and said that was so; he had forgotten that; he wondered what Miss Thatcher thought of having Sam for a relative; they were such different sort of people. He did not say that several hundred thousand dollars on the George Thatcher side accounted for some of the differences, because that idea did not occur to him, nor to Sandra; it was not in the Boardman creed to regard money as capable of creating differences. He went on describing his late encounter with interest and amusement.

"Sam's with the Victorgraph people. He goes around selling the machines. It's a mystery to me how anybody can do that — get people to buy things of you, you know," said Everett with a look of wonder and some distaste.

"Talk a thing up and brag and coax and palaver, and go through all those huckstering tricks — I'm sure *I* never could. But Sam seems to be perfectly happy and satisfied. Talks about it all the time! Absolutely absorbed in selling Victorgraphs to the exclusion of every other interest — though he did ask after you, Sandra. He said he'd seen you."

"Yes. It was months ago — last spring some time — I forget when," said Sandra carelessly, though perhaps her carelessness was not wholly genuine. "Didn't I tell you? I suppose I thought you wouldn't be interested."

"Well, I rather wish you had said something, because it was a little embarrassing for a minute today when I saw that he expected me to know all about him, and as a matter of fact, I didn't know any more than the man in the moon. However, I pretended, of course," said Everett, who was always most scrupulous not to hurt anybody's feelings. "You knew about his Victorgraphs then? He must have talked about them to you, too. He can't keep off the subject."

"Why, yes, a little — but I thought it was very interesting," Sandra said, again on the defensive, she did not know why. "I would have liked to hear more. He's been to some such queer places."

Everett became more serious. "Yes, it's a kind of pity that such opportunities for seeing the world have to be wasted on a fellow like that. He reminds me of that old story about the woman who remembered Rome or Cairo because it was the place where she bought the silk stockings! Sam told me he had sold twenty-four Victorgraphs in Honolulu. I asked him if he had seen that wonderful volcano in the Hawaiian islands, and he said yes, he'd made a trip to it, and that it was 'just like the descriptions you read, only they can't tell you *all*, ex-

actly —' those are his words," and here Everett threw back his head and laughed with thoroughgoing enjoyment. "The next thing he got out a note-book and showed me a little dictionary of Hawaiian or pidgin-English-French-native words and phrases he had collected and written down. "'I don't like this interpreter business,'" Everett quoted, mimicking admirably. "'You don't get to 'em, and having an interpreter all the time adds to your expense-account. I've made up my mind that after this I'll always know a little of the language of every country I strike. Why, I could sell a machine to every little brown brother in the Pacific Islands if I could talk to him, and I will yet before I'm through with it. You watch me!'" Think of him with his red head interviewing a cannibal king — with a missionary browning over the coals for dinner — while the Victorgraph grinds out: 'Ah Don' Wan' To See Mah Baby Thrown Down!'"

Mr. Boardman laughed; but his face changed as he asked Sam's age, and heard it placed at a scant two years or so in advance of Everett's. "Well, it's not a bad thing for a young man to be wrapped up in his work," he said.

"Yes, but you don't want him to talk about it the whole time," said Everett fastidiously. "Other people don't care to hear about it. Ordinarily that sort of thing is in abysmally bad taste, but he was so funny — unconsciously funny, I mean — that you didn't mind it for a little while."

"I thought all the men ever talked about when they were together was business," said his mother; and somehow that innocent remark ended the conversation as far as concerned Sam Thatcher, that is, though it was uttered in no such intention. Everett, after a minute, began to speak of something else, and Sandra joined in, glad of the change. She told herself frankly that she liked Sam

— Mr. Thatcher, and disliked to hear him made fun of; Everett made him seem dull, whereas he was not in the least dull; and he did not talk about his experiences all the time, though if he should there would be some excuse, for they were very unusual and entertaining. She wondered, perhaps not for the first time, why, since he was so lonesome and plainly so glad to see her that day, he had not made some effort to see her again? It is easy enough for men to see girls.

By a coincidence, the above great fundamental truth must have just penetrated to the intelligence of Mr. Samuel Thatcher, for some time during the day, Sandra was called to the telephone, and heard and knew at once the young fellow's hearty voice, though it had an odd ring of shyness and deference and anxiety, to which Sandra in this era of familiar manners was sufficiently unaccustomed. She could fancy him colouring furiously and standing before her pleased and bravely bashful as at their drug-store meeting. He wanted to know with overwhelming diffidence if she remembered him (*remembered him!*), and being assured on that point, if there was "anything on" for that night? If there wasn't, might he come out? He knew of course, that she was likely to be knee-deep in engagements — he didn't want to be in the way — the trouble was he only had a short time at home — he was just in from the road, and would have to go out again Sunday — to the Canal Zone, a couple of months' trip — he thought he would like to see her this time, if possible, before he left. This was the long-distance he was talking to her over; he was up in Jeffersonville. If not tonight, maybe she would let him know what night this week she would be at home? Sandra assured him again; there was nothing on for that night; Everett had told her he was back home; she heard he had a perfectly

wonderful time in Hawaii. Well, yes, it was some trip; he would tell her about it when he saw her; he — and here another masculine voice intervened with sardonic amiability advising him to tell it to her later, but to get off the line now! “You’ve had your five minutes, honey-boy,” it remarked; “and you can stick around tonight telling her till the milk-wagons begin to run, if old scout Pop don’t object.” Sandra slammed the instrument on the hook and jumped up with a red face. “I didn’t know we had been talking that long — I don’t believe we did!” she thought violently; then tried to figure with some uneasiness — in spite of her steady championship — how he would look, act, be dressed. He certainly seemed to be different from most of the other men she knew. Everett was right about that, she was obliged to allow unwillingly.

However, when the Victorgraph hero rang the bell and was ushered in that evening, he was entirely presentable in any company; indeed he looked pleasingly big, fresh, clean and strong, Sandra thought, and he had an eminently civilized box of chocolates under one arm. He had not brought any Hawaiian picture post-cards, or kodaks or other banal trophies of adventure — he was too sophisticated or merely too sensible for that, at any rate. Also he did not at once proceed to pour out the tale of his commercial schemes and successes, although to be sure he was with no great difficulty beguiled into talking about himself — what young man is too strong for that temptation? When all was said, Sam did not seem disposed to take himself too seriously; Sandra decided that his humour was not so unconscious as Everett had pronounced it. He perceived the grotesque aspects of his achievements as clearly and laughed at them with as keen a relish as any outsider; yet he meant to succeed. The determination

"stuck out all over him" as the girl later reported to Mrs. Alexander; she wondered at and admired and envied that humorous force, that easy, unassuming yet resolute confidence in his own resources and his ultimate mastery of circumstance.

"I wish I was a man. I'd like to do things too," she said, on top of these reflections, in sudden restlessness. "It must be great."

Sam was puzzled. "Do things? Why, I thought you were doing something right along. I thought girls — your kind of girl, of course — were on the dead jump every minute. Parties and — and dances, you know. My little cousin Julia is the busiest ever."

"Oh, yes, but that gets to be tiresome after a while. There's so much sameness. Sometimes we get very energetic and get up something for charity, or go down and serve at the Woman's Exchange, or at the Art Students' League, or something like that. I have myself lots of times, but it doesn't amount to anything; you're just doing it because everybody else is doing it. There isn't anything in it. I believe I'd like work — real work, the same as a man's. Make-your-living work."

"Work? You?" said Sam. He gazed at her an instant in silence, Sandra meeting his eyes unreservedly. Her slim figure in a bright coloured dress rested among some cushions in an old chair, at ease yet with an extraordinary effect of lightness; she moved, clasped her hands, or swung her foot, and it gave the impression of a command of her muscles equally sure and facile. One could not imagine that delicate grasp fumbling, that springy step at fault. She work, indeed! As well harness a race-horse to the plough, or turn a fine sword-blade to chipping kindlings, was what Sam thought, but had the wisdom not to say. Coming from some one else he would

receive these flowers of rhetoric with a certain distrust, and so, no doubt, would she.

"Well, I've seen something of women in business," he said cautiously. "I meet them every once in a while. They aren't exactly your style. I don't believe you'd like the life much."

"Oh, I don't mean I want to be a shop-girl, or a trained nurse or anything like that, though of course that's work —"

"Yes, it is," said Sam soberly.

"I meant — well, I don't know quite what," the girl confessed with a rueful smile. "Something big and independent, I suppose. Bright of me, isn't it? I can't really do anything."

"Oh, I expect you could if you tried," said Sam. "But I hope you won't ever have to. I don't like it. It's all wrong for a woman to get out in the world and hustle for a living. If they fail, they worry themselves to death, and if they succeed they get as hard as nails. There's my sister Kate. She's been teaching for years, and she's always made a good salary, and lived in a nice way, and had about as good a time as anybody. She's exceptionally successful. Now if she had been a man it wouldn't have hurt her, or changed her unless for the better; a man that had got along as well as Kate has would probably be a pretty good fellow. But she's just a stony little old maid — it's awful!" said the young man with so much horrified pity that Sandra, for the soul of her, could not keep from laughing. "Oh, you may think it's funny," he added, beginning to smile himself; "but if you could be with her once, you'd understand. Even her clothes have a hard, shiny, keep-off-the-grass sort of look. You have a feeling that you can't make a dent on her anywhere. It's unnatural."

Sandra fell back in fresh merriment. "Why her clothes haven't got anything to do with it!"

"Yes, they have!" Sam asseverated stoutly. "She thinks because she works like a man, she ought to dress like a man. She might just as well have nice things all soft and fluffy. That's the way women's clothes ought to be."

Sandra sat upright among her cushions, flushing slightly as she realized that this bit of description came close to fitting her own toilette and surroundings, which moreover as was evident from the expression of his honest blue eyes were very much to Mr. Thatcher's taste. She was about to point out that softness and fluffiness would be misplaced at a teacher's desk, or in an office, when he spoke again, this time to ask irrelevantly if she danced as much as she used to?

"Oh, yes. They generally come after me to do some stunt like that at entertainments — amateur vaudeville and things like that, you know. Ever so many of the girls are taking up fancy dancing now, though. It's getting to be a craze."

"Every time you move you make me think of how you used to dance," said Sam, surveying her thoughtfully.

"You used to dance too."

"I never was a star, though. Nobody ever suggested that *I* could make a fortune on the stage. But I've seen plenty of them — headliners, too, way up — that couldn't touch you."

Sandra incontinently bounced up and flourished him an exaggerated curtsey. "Kind sir, I thank you!"

The young man began to laugh, though his eyes were full of a serious admiration. "There, that's just what I mean," he declared; "when you did that, you were

just like some kind of a little puff-ball — as if there were no weight to you at all!”

They heard Everett whistling up the front steps and his key in the door. He came in directly, hearing their voices, and greeted Sam warmly, though glancing from one to the other in a faint surprise, instantly suppressed with his careful courtesy. Sandra had not warned the family of the impending visit. Why should she, indeed? Young men callers were no novelty. Yet now for a single moment, she wished uncomfortably that she had mentioned this one. Mr. Thatcher departed ere long, and Everett, having closed the door on him, came strolling back to the living-room fire with his hands in his pockets and an amused quirk at the corners of his lips.

“Well, well, evening-clothes and a flower in his button-hole. Quite doggish! Can’t tell *him* anything about the proprieties, can you?”

“You have on evening-clothes yourself, Ev.”

“So I have, so I have!” said Everett, affecting to look himself over, and shaking his head as if disheartened by the spectacle. “I don’t come up to his level, though,” he sighed in defeat and resignation.

“I don’t see why you’re so down on Sam Thatcher — Mr. Thatcher!” said his sister almost resentfully.

“Why, I’m not down on him, San. I only think he’s funny. He seemed funnier than ever tonight all dressed up and doing society. It doesn’t suit him. You have to be born to it, you have to be used to it all your life from the beginning,” said Everett, reasonably. There could be no doubt that he himself had been “used to it all his life from the beginning,” even the most careless observer would have known that.

CHAPTER VIII

YOUNG Thatcher, having made a fairly promising start, continued to "do society" as exemplified by attentions to Miss Boardman as persistently as his lengthening and far-flung absences would allow. During the brief intervals at home, he was for ever taking her to the theatre, to the ball-game, to the automobile-races, to the Horse-Show; he was lavish in flowers and candies; she was the first person he called up on reaching town, and the last of whom he took leave; and while away, lest she forget, he wrote her surprisingly entertaining letters with descriptions of queer scenes and encounters interspersed with close and good-humoured comment on the world as he found it that made very acceptable reading. Sandra showed some of them to her grandmother. Inevitably rumour began to be busy with their two names, and, as usual, met with all kinds of receptions, unexpectedly warm and unexpectedly cool. For example Miss Susie Thatcher, contrary to what might have been looked for, when sundry friends benevolently undertook to enlighten her, waved the matter aside without the smallest show of jealousy, philosophical beyond belief!

"O, I know all about Sam courting the Boardman girl," she said. "I guess she's a right nice girl, she was real cute when she was little, along about ten or eleven years old, coming to dancing-school. I used to see considerable of her then, not so much since she grew up, of course. She's a society girl, and I'm old enough to be her mother anyway. But she comes of nice folks.

Father liked Mr. Boardman. If Sam's taken a notion to her, I don't see why it shouldn't be all right. I'm not crazy to see him married, but my goody, I can't expect him to sit around with an old maid sister all his natural life! Suppose he came bringing home a somebody from Korea or Patagonia or any of those outlandish places he goes to! It wouldn't make any difference how I felt, I wouldn't say anything. I'd treat her just as nice as I knew how. But if it's going to be one of our own home girls, I'm just that much better pleased."

Mrs. George Thatcher — but it was never possible to say just what Mrs. George Thatcher thought; she did not permit herself much leeway in the expression of feelings or enthusiasms, and besides in society one does not become excited over anything, certainly not over the prospect of a distant alliance with — ahem! — another old and elevated family. So Mrs. George only smiled discreetly when the subject came up; it might be true — oh, no, she did not know anything positive about it — Miss Boardman was a charming girl — Mr. Thatcher's nephew a very nice, manly young fellow — Julia was on tiptoe with suspense! And so on, ending with a little laugh which dismissed the matter. However, she asked them both to her dinner preceding the Holiday Ball, though she had taken scarcely any notice of Mr. Thatcher's manly young nephew for years, and had been known to intimate tactfully that Sandra Boardman's set of girls were really a little too old for Julia; and they went to the dinner and to the Ball afterwards and had a memorable evening. Mrs. George was the most agreeable of chaperons and deservedly popular with the young people.

Nobody would ever know what were Mrs. Alexander Boardman's views either. She displayed none of the curiosity or of the garrulity of old age, and could have

been trusted with any secret. Mrs. Richard, of course, would have sliced off her tongue, she would have perished where she stood rather than betray any suspicion of what was going forward. She was a good woman, devoted to her daughter, and as far from being a snob as from being a money-worshipper; nevertheless it was at about this time that she began to speak of twenty-four or -five as the suitable and sensible age for a girl to be married (she used to favour twenty-one!) and to point out that class distinctions in our democratic country and in this day of lightning mutations were absurd; it made no difference of what humble stock a person came, it was only he himself that counted — all of which was so true that no one stopped to remark what revolutionary doctrine it was for Mrs. Richard Chase Boardman, who had been an Everett, to be promulgating! As for Richard, he may have been too deeply engrossed in business for the gossip to have reached him; very likely he would have pooh-pooh'd it after the ridiculous and pathetic fashion of fathers, on the ground that Sandra and the Thatcher boy were both too young to be dreaming of marriage; wasn't it but yesterday that she was running around in socks with her head of black hair bobbed off like a small black silk tassel? Married — nonsense! Poor Richard! Everett supported his father, however, by pooh-poohing the idea too, though for a different reason.

“No doubt that Thatcher's in earnest,” he said to his mother privately. “He shows all the signs. But San will never take him in the world!”

“Don't you think so?” asked the lady anxiously.

Everett made a grimace. “Oh, never! She's just having a good time, the way girls do sometimes. I don't know that it's altogether fair to him — I'd rather Sandra didn't encourage him. She oughtn't to have let him get

so far, but I daresay it happened so gradually she didn't realize it," the young man said, criticizing reluctantly and humanely as was his wont. "But you can't say anything to her. You can't stop it now. Our friend Samuel will have to stand up and take his medicine, I'm afraid."

"That's a pity. He — he seems to be very nice." Mrs. Richard murmured in a troubled and regretful voice. "Somebody was saying the other day that he was quite a — a rising young man. Bright and successful, I think they said. I — I suppose he makes money, you know," she hinted guiltily.

"I shouldn't wonder. He's that kind. Probably thinks money is the biggest thing in the world!" Everett said with contempt. "Don't you worry though, Mother. He's impossible, and Sandra knows it. She'll turn him down."

"Oh, yes, of course. I'm not worrying," said his mother — in spite of which assuring words, poor Mrs. Lucy's countenance took on a very downcast and disappointed look, as soon as her son's back was turned.

Everett was right in one respect, at least; whether as regarded Sandra, who can tell? Perhaps not even Sandra herself. But Sam was in earnest. The straightforward young fellow could not conceal it; he scarcely tried, nor had he any notion of the excuses, apologies and explanations Mrs. Richard made for him in the character of her daughter's suitor. Sam was too kind-hearted and rather too shrewd to take offence at her, had he known; he would merely have thought her foolish and a little funny. What if Sandra was a Boardman with a bunch of old grandfathers and grandmothers going back to the year One? What earthly difference did that make? They had nothing to do with her or him. He thought she was the daintiest and dearest girl he had ever known; take her

any way you chose, watch her dance, listen to her talk, you would have to acknowledge that there was nobody like her, nobody who approached her. She could say the brightest things, and do so much on such different lines and do it all so well; and with it all was not a bit vain, but just as sweet and frank and full of fun and — and — Sam exhausted his adjectives. He was dead in love, the young man said to himself, reddening, with a half laugh; he was probably behaving like an absolute fool, but who cares, he asked defiantly. It was nothing to be ashamed of; if she liked him well enough, why shouldn't they get married? He could take care of her, that was one certain thing; he wouldn't think of asking her otherwise. You had to have money to get married nowadays; this love-in-a-cottage business didn't go any more. That was right, too; that was common-sense. Well, he made plenty for two people to live on — and maybe one or two more, he thought, reddening again, all to himself. Live well, too; he could give Sandra anything her father was able to give her — and here Sam glanced aside from his own affairs long enough to wonder why Mr. Boardman didn't retire. He looked ready to, and he must have got enough by this time. Some men keep on and die in the harness, though, and that might be the better way. "At any rate, by the time I get to his age I mean to be fixed so I won't have to worry," Samuel told himself with an arrogance which he tempered the next moment by adding prudently: "if my luck holds out." He did not feel much afraid of announcing his candidacy for membership in the family to Sandra's father. "I'll bet my bank-account's as big as his this minute!" he thought, reverting to the main issue.

He spent a good deal of time trying to make up his mind what he would say to her, how he would go about

offering himself. Once he tried to write, but that was so desperate a failure that after a dozen beginnings, Sam threw all the scrawled papers into the trash-basket, disgusted. He was in San Francisco at the moment, very lonely in the big hotel; the firm were going to send him to Europe next, he knew; that would make a nice wedding-trip; neither of them had ever been over there. If Sandra said yes — ! Maybe they'd want him to start right away, though, and girls always had to have a lot of things, new clothes and all that. Well, she could get them over there — in Paris, by George! She'd like that. They would go to the Opera, and to all those queer restaurants and places you read about in the novels, and to the summer-resorts on the coast of Normandy or wherever they were, and to that gambling-place, Monte Carlo. They'd put in a good time, Sandra and he! The gleaming prospect enlivened the rest of his stay, and he continued to plan about it in a happy and hopeful excitement all the way back, as his sleeper climbed the Sierras, climbed the Rockies, rumbled across the continent towards Denver, Chicago, Home.

Well, man proposes! Sam was only one of hundreds of young fellows all over the country who were meditating the same project; nine-tenths of them probably carried it out and were married and lived happily ever after. It seems hard that he should not have been of their number. For Sandra might have said yes; the family could scarcely have raised any serious objection; Society would have been ready with congratulations, candlesticks, silver salad-bowls, *bibelots* without end; this chapter would have wound up with the famous strains from Lohengrin in a mist of frock-coats, festive hats, smilax and bride-roses, champagne and rice — all this might have been had not an unreasonable fate ruled otherwise. Unconscious that

it was dogging or lying in wait for him, Samuel reached home late one night — there was a tasty cold luncheon on the table, and Susie was sitting up for him, in a kimono with her hair in curlers, and the telegram announcing his coming clutched in her hand as it had been ever since its arrival — and the next day he arose and went down to Victorgraph headquarters, and held a long consultation with his superiors in the inner office; and later declining an invitation to the manager's club, started off for the Woman's Exchange, a choice which moved his acquaintances in the salesroom to wonder and some mild ribaldry. They warned him against corrupt associations and excess in eating, wanted to know if he was celebrating on account of his return, if he had gone on the water-wagon, etc. "Why, I like the Exchange Tea-Room first-rate, that's why I go," said Sam, defending himself as best he might. "They have nice home-cooking, you know, chicken-pies —" He escaped, pursued by the penetrating remark that it might be chicken he was after, but not in pies, which was a little too near the truth to suit the gentleman.

The Exchange was lodged upstairs over a row of small shops built along the street on what had once been the esplanade in front of the Old Church of Our Saviour. This space had become too valuable there in the middle of the business district to be left unoccupied and unproductive; but the architects with a fine feeling both æsthetic and reverent contrived to render the money-changers on the steps of the temple as inoffensive as possible, what with decorative gables, casement-windows, and a grave arched entrance to the church itself. Miner tradesmen, a jeweller, a florist, a stationer and so on had the shops along the sidewalk, overhead the Exchange set out its tables in three or four low-ceilinged rooms of fascinatingly irregular shape with alcoves and bay-

windows and snug little corners here and there, which caused many people to proclaim it the quaintest and most attractive tea-room in town. Moreover, it was a place where you saw everybody you knew; it was like going to an afternoon reception; the lady patronesses took turns at superintending for a week; there were always charming and novel trifles to buy, and one had the sensation of helping some poor and deserving person, more than likely a gentlewoman whom it would have been impossible to help any other way.

None of these arguments had any weight with young Mr. Thatcher, however; he was not going to the Exchange because it was picturesque or fashionable or philanthropic — not he! The hypocrite did not even care a rap for the home-cooking; if taste in eating were to be consulted Sam would much have preferred a glass of beer and a huge, half-raw beefsteak *Béarnaise* at the Café Métropole. He had other and very different reasons for patronizing the Exchange, and then too the same inexorable fate may have helped him to the decision — who knows? He walked up the stairs — casting a glance on the way at the jeweller's window where there was a blazing big solitaire diamond which would have looked well on a hand he knew of — and at the top, entering the tea-room, ran into not the light slight figure he was looking out for, with the trim skirts and shirtwaist and the smartly twisted black hair — alack, no! Instead, it was somebody weighing upwards of a hundred pounds more and in trousers to boot, namely: his uncle George!

“Hello, Sam!” said this one, cordially. “Going West, I hear. Hey? What, you’ve *been* — been and come back? Well, I can’t keep track of you any more. Here’s a table, sit down here. Let’s see what they’ve got that’s good today.” He fixed the eyeglasses on his big, strong

nose, and surveyed the card with an expression which moved Sam to inquire if he came there often?

"Well, between ourselves, not any oftener than I can help," said George, dropping his voice and glasses at the same time as he leaned across the table with a look of humorous secrecy. "I have to, once in a while, to please your Aunt Mattie, you know. She's interested in this thing — all the ladies are. They all come down here and help run it. They even have the girls helping too, behind the counters, when they get into a rush."

"Do they?" said Sam in accents of vast surprise, the while his gaze roamed disappointedly about the place. "You don't say so!"

"Sure. Julia's done it. They don't wait on the tables, of course, but just over there where they sell the crochet-work and fancy stuff. Take a chicken-pie, Sam, that's about as good as anything they have. Believe I'll have a tumbler of buttermilk —"

"Is Julia here today? They seem to be pretty busy," Sam asked innocently. He had understood Sandra to say in her last letter that she might have to officiate at about this time; but she was nowhere to be seen, although their table, backed into the corner between a pillar and a hatrack commanded almost all of the room. He would telephone her after lunch and go out to the house tonight; but if there was a chance of seeing her in the meantime, he didn't want to miss it.

"Why, yes, Julia was coming down, and then she said something about something else having turned up — I don't remember what it was now. She was going to get Miss Boardman or somebody to take her place, that's the last I heard," said Mr. Thatcher, callously scoring down chicken-pie, buttermilk, hot rolls, and apple meringue on the order-pad, just as if he had not that instant breathed

the most wonderful name on earth. "Good trip, Sam? You ought to be getting to be quite a salesman by this time."

"I'm pretty fair," said Sam with becoming modesty. "The machines sell themselves really. Well, I'd like to have seen Julia. But Miss Boardman doesn't seem to be here either."

Mr. Thatcher looked around. "No. Great business, hey?" said he with a grunt of good-natured and indulgent sarcasm. "These girls! Dependable, aren't they? It's lucky they aren't working for their living." And then, following up some subconscious connection of ideas, he added casually: "There's a man that's gone back a lot these last few years — Dick Boardman."

"Hey?" said Sam, a little startled. "Gone back how?"

"Why, lost his grip, you know. That happens to men sometimes, when they get a little past their prime," explained Mr. Thatcher, forgetting that he himself was of Dick Boardman's generation. "Oh, yes he's not the man he was. It's quite noticeable at times. Not that he's *failed*, of course; a man don't fail as early as sixty, unless his health is bad, and I don't think anything's the matter with Boardman that way. He's just got slow, and everything seems to be terribly hard work for him. You go to him and try to get him to go into anything, or to do anything, and you'll find he can't; he can't get started somehow. He'll put you off — next month — next year — that sort of talk. That's a sure sign. An active man with all his faculties in good working order don't put things off. He knows that anything he can do next year he can do this year."

Sam was struck by this aphorism. "That's *so*! That's one of the first things you have to learn," he said, with the conviction of experience.

"Yeah. And when you let *go*, as I say, that's a sure sign. That's what makes me think he's done. He's through, I guess. It's a pity. I hate to see as good a man as Boardman's been go like that," said George Thatcher, peppering and salting and beginning to eat with an appetite not at all impaired by his philosophical regrets; the ranks were for ever thinning and closing up again, how often in twenty-five years of business life had he beheld that spectacle! "They all know it in his office — they don't talk about it, of course, but they know it."

"Well, now, I never noticed anything. I've never tried to do any business with Mr. Boardman, though," said Sam concerned.

"Oh, there's nothing wrong with him. I didn't mean to give you that impression," said his uncle hastily. "It's only that he's not like he used to be — hasn't got the life and energy. No get up, no push, no snap to him any more. That's all I meant."

"He doesn't have to work anyhow, I expect. He must have enough to quit on."

"Nobody's got enough to quit nowadays," said the older man sententiously. "Say you do make some money — those things are always exaggerated, and everybody always supposes a man has a great deal more than he's really got — but say you do make money, you never know where you are or who's going to take a crack at you next. The cost of living going up steadily, and a pack of damn fools tinkering with the laws all the time; I tell you you can't afford to quit. I doubt if Boardman can anyhow. He's always made a good income probably, but he can't have been able to save very much with that expensive family — that is — um —" Mr. Thatcher interrupted himself as memory nudged him; Mattie had said some-

thing about Sam and the Boardman girl! "He's a very fine man still — nice people all the Boardmans!" he wound up rather lamely.

They went on talking about other things; two or three acquaintances drifted in; the place was quite full by the time they got up to go. And then Sam, having resigned himself to the fact that Sandra was not there and not coming, was on his way to ask the whereabouts of the telephone-booth, when around the corner from the very table where he and his uncle had lately been seated, he came upon her!

She was in a chair by one of the tables and must have been having luncheon herself, for the dishes, scarcely touched, were still before her; she sat staring at them with a listless and absent air very unusual with her, Sam noticed in the half-second before she sprang up and greeted him. So he was back! Four weeks! Had it been a perfectly grand trip? Well, of course, he had been there before, still it must always be interesting. Yes, she had got his last letter, but she wasn't certain about the day — what? She had said she might be down here at the Exchange? The idea of his remembering that! She had just mentioned it, she didn't dream he would come — Sandra grew bright pink under his eyes, and laughed and rattled along in a style not natural to her. Yes, she had been there quite a while, sitting right there, it was funny they hadn't seen each other sooner. Wasn't that his uncle that just went out? Tonight? Why, of course! She flashed off to her station behind the counters, leaving Sam elate yet disturbed. In spite of her insistent gaiety, he was assailed by dim fears that all was not right; she might not be well, she had looked so tired and out of spirits just now when she was sitting there alone, thinking nobody saw her.

CHAPTER IX

MOST men, by the time they have arrived at mature years, are willing to accept the fact that nearly all their gods — and goddesses! — have clay feet. When all's said, it is not an uncomfortable discovery; in my heart of hearts I do not want anybody, not even my particular deity much less my next-door neighbour, to be perfect; his imperfections somehow give me a little room for my own. But, as has been hinted, this philosophical spirit is, generally speaking, masculine; the ladies will be for ever looking for perfection or thinking they have found it; and when the average father, son, brother or husband takes a sober survey of himself upon the pedestal where his womenkind have placed him, it must be with an extraordinary hodge-podge of irritation, tenderness, amusement and some shame. There is no telling what would be his sensations on finding his dummy tumbled down, because he never knows when that catastrophe occurs; the women guard it from him as carefully as they guard it from the outside public. For that matter, given half an excuse, they will try desperately to hide the damage from themselves.

So now Sandra, a tragi-comic figure, sat before the fragments of the super-father she had been brought up to believe in, making futile efforts to patch him together and replace him above the altar. It does not need to be told that she had overheard every word of Mr. Thatcher's; in fact, she had been sitting there in unintentional con-

cealment behind the hats and overcoats for some minutes before the two gentlemen came in. Her own name was spoken; and before she could move or announce herself, the mischief was done. Down crashed poor Richard Boardman from his high niche; her father, the family oracle, the ultimate power, the source of wisdom and dollars, gave place in a twinkling as though honest George had uttered some diabolical spell instead of his not unkind statements to a man aging bodily and mentally whose judgments were no longer stable, whose fortunes were on the wane. In the first flash of unwelcome enlightenment, Sandra's imagination nimbly reeled off before her a film wherein bankruptcy courts, tenements, and charity-homes were the least appalling features. If her father grew to be totally unfit for business, or rather *when* he grew to be, for the dire day must be approaching, what would become of them all, what was going to happen, what would they do? She would have set the other man's words down to envy or personal dislike or mere lack of insight, but there was something dishearteningly convincing about his compassionate indifference; one could not associate it with ill-will or stupidity. He was right; she began shrinkingly to recall a hundred small signs she herself had noticed and let pass, not knowing to what they pointed. It could only be a matter of time until others besides Mr. Thatcher noticed them too — and then what? She thought of her mother and grandmother and wondered if they knew; the feminine instinct advised her that even if they did, they would not betray it to her. Nor would she betray it; her father should never know that she realized he was a failure, a broken man. He had always been so good and kind; and what had they been, she herself and all the rest of them? An expensive family, Mr. Thatcher said, and he was right again. It was a scorch-

ing appraisal that Sandra reviewed a good many times that afternoon.

Let nobody laugh. She was not altogether funny with her ignorance and her exaggerations; she was only a "nice" girl, a finished specimen of her class. The girl at the cashier's desk who was five years younger actually, and ten years older in experience, capacity for work and practical knowledge of the world, would have felt no such dismay at the same information about *her* father; the young women who waited on the tables would have gone on serenely planning how to stretch their exiguous incomes — after they had paid Ma their board and helped out with little Johnny's school-expenses — to cover a pair of silk stockings or a new hat, most likely; they and Miss Cashier had seen so much of incompetent or broken-down fatherhood in their homespun lives that the spectacle had lost its terrors. To have a job and to be emphatically "on" it were the things of real importance from their standpoint; come death or the devil, there is no frightening a woman who has a job and is intent on keeping it. Poor Sandra, in her preoccupation, could not even stay "on" the very simple job assigned to her that afternoon, but made a dozen mistakes in reading price-tags, handling change, tying up packages. She was planning, in the most unselfish and at the same time the most self-centred way in the world, what she could do to stem the oncoming flood of calamity; it did not occur to her that a practical move would have been to discharge thoroughly the duties of her present position, if only as a means of accustoming herself to work and responsibility.

She started home, still planning, even getting as far as the conversation in which she would first lead up to, and then announce, her intentions to the family. It would have to be done, of course, with the utmost care; none of

them must suspect her recent discovery, least of all her poor father — already it was “poor father” with Sandra! There would be a tempest of objections which, however, she would deal with resolutely. Everett would be the hardest to win over, or better say, to ride over, for nobody would be really won. If Ev knew what she knew — and he might have found out just as she had — he would be sure to think any such enterprise as she contemplated a direct slur upon himself; he was so touchy when the women of his family were concerned, he would be so anxious to save them from the hard contacts of the world, to continue them in their blissful ignorance, the same expensive drones they had always been. Sandra was very fond of her brother; she admired him and had confidence in him, but with a kind of ingenuous shrewdness, she judged that in these circumstances Everett could do nothing more and was no better prepared than herself. It would be years, she thought, before he could make enough to take care of them; it was all he could do to take care of himself now. If he had been as lucky as Sam Thatcher — but it was impossible to figure Everett succeeding in Sam Thatcher’s place.

And here, it cannot be denied that one way out of some of the difficulties, one escape from responsibility as far as she herself was concerned, presented itself to Sandra. It was the way the Mid-Victorians would have chosen — even her mother, even her grandmother. The poor things knew of scarcely any other. And she liked Sam. That was just it, Sandra thought, flushing with sudden humiliated revolt. She liked him too well to marry him; it was too ignobly easy, too convenient. Besides, just now, for an oddity, she was beginning to be conscious of a subtle elation; the prospect of work, independence and helpfulness somehow charmed and flattered; the adventure

beckoned. And, remembering vaguely some heroic platitude about Life flinging down the gage which she must have heard in a baccalaureate address, she pictured herself taking it up proud, fearless, successful and applauded!

Nevertheless, it required a certain daring for her to take what was obviously the first practical step on the course she had already laid out, that is: to call at Mr. Matson's on her way home. Her impulse was to put the visit off until tomorrow; but common-sense or mere impatience counselled that there was no time like the present. Sandra had enough sense of humour or ironic perception to smile a little as she felt her confidence wavering. If it took all this screwing-up to tell Mr. Matson and ask his advice, what sort of spirit would she show when attempting to carry her scheme through, she reflected, going up the well-known steps. The darky porter who had been there so many years knew her and let her in with a smiling flourish; full many a tip had he received from Miss Boardman and from divers young gentlemen with whom she had practised special dances for special occasions, and his famous remark: "'Pears lak dey ain't quite so much goin' on in our set this wintah as usual, Mistah Everett, suh," quoted everywhere by that admirable mimic, had become a classic. Sandra went into the familiar little office on the right where appointments were made; it served as a cloakroom, too, for parties and on exhibition-nights; she had entered it scores of times to make ready for some public appearance, but never in such a state of excitement as now. A lesson was going on in the next room on the other side of the sliding doors. Sandra could hear the Victorgraph — one of Sam's Victorgraph's, no doubt — grinding out syncopated melody, and Mr. Matson's voice; "One and, two and, *turn*, step out, *turn*, step out. . . ." What would it be like to keep that up with

successive batches of pupils day in and day out, all your life? Mr. Matson had been on the stage, it was known, had probably cut a spirited figure, heard the sound of clapping hands, responded to a curtain-call — and this was what he had come to, or had deliberately chosen! The perspective was not exhilarating; still, one can stand a good deal for five dollars an hour, thought the girl with a new-born philosophy, that augured not ill.

After all, the interview went off well enough — that is to say, it was not nearly so embarrassing as Sandra had expected, perhaps because her assumption of this new rôle was not so important an event as she had naïvely imagined; Mr. Matson listened to her with a matter-of-fact air which relieved even while it slightly disconcerted. She had the grace to laugh at herself afterwards. Whatever her ancient teacher thought of Sandra's proposed activities, whether he took the business for the vagary of a rich, idle, bored, novelty-chasing young woman, or whether he recognized her to be in earnest, he was too worldly-wise or too humane, or it is even possible too much interested not to give her serious attention and good counsel. Sandra went home with a sheaf of what he called "literature," letters, circulars and what-not pertaining to the subject, and dressed for the evening studying them. At dinner she was so preoccupied that she forgot to watch for those signs of decay in her father which — as it had seemed to her a few hours earlier — must be multiplying with sad rapidity; and when she reminded herself, it suddenly became impossible to believe that anything was the matter with him, or that she, Sandra, was presently going to be the sole prop and stay of the family! Even with Mr. Matson's literature stowed behind the sofa-cushions in the parlour ready for further reading, even with his practical suggestions still in her ears, her project

took on an air of inconsequence like a thousand other projects about summer-trips or new dresses which she was in the habit of dreaming over without any expectation of carrying them out. There everybody sat, looking just as usual. Grandma and Mother playing a game of double-solitaire which they had invented between them, Daddy reading "Joseph Vance" the novel recently out by that new-old English writer, with intermittent short naps; he often fell asleep nowadays over a book or magazine, but so did Sandra herself sometimes. Against this comfortable, everyday background she and her plans all at once became preposterous; thus it had always been, thus it always would be; nothing had ever happened or could happen to alter their scheme of life; it was as firm-rooted and unassailable as the everlasting hills. As if she could do anything! As if any effort on her part were needed!

"Is anybody coming this evening, Sandra?" her mother asked, shuffling the cards.

"No. Oh, yes! Mr. Thatcher."

"Oh," said Mrs. Richard, and began laying out the pack afresh. It was a minute or more before she said with her eyes fixed on the cards, as she adjusted them with elaborate precision. "That grey foulard never has looked well since it was cleaned. It seemed to change the colour somehow, so it's not so becoming as it was at first. I'm afraid you'll have to give up wearing it."

"Oh, it's all right," said Sandra curtly. She got up and went into the parlour in a sharp change of mood. Her mother's words, translated into plain speech, advised her to dress herself with greater care and look her best so as to captivate Sam Thatcher — so Sandra thought in contempt of the out-of-date maternal guile. Anybody could see through Mother. That was the way they did in her day; and to be sure, girls practised the same or kindred

wiles now, but they were more straightforward about it, they didn't try to cover it up with silly excuses; they would even make fun of themselves for doing it. They had more sense. Grey dress, indeed! Her mother was probably about to hint in the same foolishly round-about manner that she put on her old-rose. Anybody would suppose that the whole end and aim of a girl's life was to catch some man. And why was Mother so anxious all of a sudden for her to take Sam? Sandra, recalling other occasions on which the elder lady had put in an over-eager oar to help him along, grew grave. Rarely does the American parent venture upon any interference in these matters, so that to Sandra this behaviour of her mother's seemed so extreme that she could only connect it gloomily with her late discoveries. "Poor Moms! She has an idea of getting *me* settled and safe anyhow, before Father goes to pieces!" thought the girl; and for the second time that day: "That was the way all the women used to do — marry somebody, some poor fellow, it didn't make any difference who. They couldn't help it; they didn't have half the chance then that they do now." She fished out the circulars, and plunged into them again, all her resolutions revived.

Sam found her in the middle of this reading on his arrival an hour later; the ill-starred youth had shaved and groomed himself to the last nicety, and was rather nervous and voluble, with that headlight of a solitaire — four hundred and fifty, he had furtively gone in and priced it — glimmering, so to speak, from the recesses of his mind. He saw nothing amiss with the grey foulard; it had a large white collar rolling back from Sandra's slim throat, and deep white cuffs, all of which Sam thought very tasteful, though indeed he abjectly admired everything she wore; and sitting by the lamp among her

cushions and circulars, she seemed to him "like a real little home girl," he said fondly to himself. It occurred to him that that might be a pretty good way to begin — to tell her she looked like a *home* girl would lead up to *the* subject. And so, after the first perfunctory words, and after he had gone into the other room and said a how-d'ye-do to her seniors with whom he had reasons for wishing to stand well, and had escaped from their uninteresting civilities — after all this, Samuel finally got himself down in the chair in front of Sandra, and fidgeting a little with first one foot crossed on his knee and held in his hands and then the other, began:

"It's great to get back. Seeing you sitting there gives me more of a home feeling than — than my own home even!"

"Gracious!" ejaculated Sandra inwardly, with a slight panicky feeling. "That doesn't sound very appreciative of your sister," she announced primly.

"Oh, Susie's all right — she's the best sister ever. But you — you're different, you know," said Sam, wondering within him how he could sit there and utter such an imbecility; but aside from the one thing he wanted to talk about, his brain was a vacuum; in desperation he groped for the cue he had fancied so felicitous. "You're just like a — a — a little *home* girl."

Sandra wavered for a breath before the unconscious pleading of his eyes. She liked him best of all the men she knew; he was so nice; and just now he was so funny and — and *dear*, so awkward and anxious and afraid of her, and he was having such a terrible time getting started!

"That's such a pretty dress you have on," said Sam — and privately pronounced himself a luridly qualified chump. Why couldn't he think of something sensible to

say? Or why couldn't he come to the point at once?

Alas, he had come to the point—the turning point! That unlucky mention of the dress aroused anew all the girl's heady pride; her anxieties, her ambitions crowded back upon her. Quixotic, they exhibited the quixotic quality of being creditable; there was something a little noble in her extravagant misconception of the circumstances and of her duty. Marry Sam, and set her mother's mind at rest, and slip out of trouble; marry him and take it easy; marry him and let the family shift for themselves, or saddle them on her husband's shoulders! Oh, the shabby trick, the cheap, cheap expedient! He learned forward and picked up a dangling end of her girdle, slipping it through and through his fingers mechanically; he cleared his throat; he would say the words if she did not prevent him. Sandra sat upright, twitching the ribbon out of his hands, and spoke precipitately.

"I want to tell you something. It seems as if you ought to know. I—I heard what you and Mr. Thatcher were talking about at lunch today."

Sam stared at her, startled by the abrupt movement, and the dramatic emphasis she put into a statement which, for the moment, conveyed nothing to him. Uncle George and the Exchange were miles out of his mind.

"Yes?" he said inquiringly, and waited.

"I was sitting right behind you all the time, and so I couldn't help hearing everything. I didn't mean to; but I—I didn't think quick enough to stop you," said Sandra.

Sam perceived that her tragic tone invited or awaited something responsive, to which he found himself stupidly inadequate. He could see nothing in the situation to warrant growing so "intense" all of a sudden. The truth was, his uncle's disclosures about Mr. Boardman had made

little or no impression on the young man; it was natural enough that men of that generation should be going down hill; and at any rate, one heard all sorts of talk on the street, to which it was not necessary to pay much attention, nine-tenths of it being uttered in mistake or exaggeration. He was so far from recognizing what Sandra referred to, that, searching his mind, he came upon the horrid suspicion that maybe he and Uncle George had been entertaining themselves with some off-colour joke or anecdote, though neither one of them was much given that way; then he dismissed the idea, sure that she wouldn't have spoken of it, if that had been the case.

"Yes?" he said again as sympathetically as he was able. "I—I guess it's all right. We weren't telling any secrets."

"I suppose it wasn't any secret to your uncle," said Sandra gloomily. "I suppose everybody knows. But I know Mr. Thatcher wouldn't have spoken that way about my father if he had dreamed I was anywhere around to hear him. Of course I'd have found out for myself sooner or later anyhow, so I don't want you to think that I'm offended, or to feel badly because it's happened this way. It seemed underhanded somehow not to tell you that I was listening."

Now at last illumination descended upon Sam, to his mortal embarrassment. "Oh, *that!* That about—that is, what Uncle George said—" he stammered. "Why—why, I wouldn't think anything of *that!* If I were in your place, I mean. Uncle George was just talking, you know."

"He meant it. He wouldn't have said it if he hadn't thought it was true."

"Why, yes, he would—he was just talking—people say a lot of things they don't really mean. They—just

get to talking, and it sounds different from what they think — they don't mean to be taken literally — they're just talking along carelessly," protested the young man, troubled and regretful. "Anyway, what did Uncle George say, really? I've kind of forgotten what he *did* say, so you see it didn't seem serious or important to me —"

"It wasn't your father."

"No, but still — look here, don't feel so badly! Why, he only said Mr. Boardman wasn't in very good health, didn't he? That's all he said. That doesn't mean that — that your father's going to — to die. He's probably not quite so strong this spring and needs a rest; everybody ought to take a rest once in a while. My goodness, I'm sorry this thing happened! Uncle George would be worried to death if he thought anything he said had got you so worked up. He wouldn't have done it for anything —"

"He didn't do anything but tell the truth when I happened to be where I could hear him. Nobody's to blame. Don't *you* feel so badly," said the girl generously. "*I'm* not sorry. Honestly, I'm not. It's just as I say, I *had* to find it out some day, and one time's as good as another. It couldn't be easy for me whenever it happened." She paused, glancing towards the living-room, and went on in a lower voice. "Mr. Thatcher didn't say anything about poor Dad's health. You *know* that. You're just trying to be kind, and — and I think it's lovely of you, but it's no use. That's not what's the matter with Dad."

Sam sat silent, feeling himself lamentably short of consoling arguments. "Well, your father's getting older, of course, and that tells on a man. You can't expect him to be what he was a few years ago," he offered at length. "But you mustn't worry about him. He's ten times as

capable as lots of men his age and younger. I've heard them speak of how Mr. Boardman can work — oh, time and time again!" said Sam, warming to the subject. "They all say he's a wonder, he's such a worker —"

"He's had to be. He's had such a load always — all of us to take care of," said Sandra.

"Oh, pshaw, that hasn't got anything to do with it!" said Sam, helplessly conscious of having blundered again; it was indeed impossible to say the right thing, but he kept on desperately. "He's the kind of man that wouldn't be happy unless he was working, and taking care of a family. He —"

"Well, I've made up my mind to one thing. I'm not going to be taken care of any longer," Sandra said.

"You're not — ? You're — ?"

"I'm going to work."

There was a pause during which Mr. Thatcher assimilated this information with a blank countenance. "Going to work?" he repeated finally in a voice and with a manner that fairly radiated objection, though he was honestly endeavouring to render them perfectly non-committal: Who was he to raise objections, and by what right? "Why, *why*? What for? What do you want to go to work for? You don't have to."

"Oh, but I *do* — or I will in a little while. I might as well begin. I've always wanted to anyhow — I mean that here recently I've been thinking a good deal about it," said Sandra, earnestly. She forgot the young fellow's own plans and hopes, only relying on his sympathetic understanding as she went on diffidently yet eagerly. "I felt as if I'd like to do something and be of some use long before this. That's the reason I say I'm not sorry to — to have had my eyes opened. I might have gone on for ever in that slipshod way, just saying to myself

that I'd like to work! And time is so important —"

Sam made a movement. "Oh, *time!*" he said almost angrily. "There isn't any such awful hurry. You act as if the bottom had fallen out of everything! Why, nothing's happened — probably nothing ever will happen. Of course I don't know anything about it, and it's none of my business anyhow, but I haven't the least doubt that your father's got plenty enough to live on, if he never did another stroke of work in his life —"

She arrested him with a solemn face. "There! You've come to the very thing that first worried me. I let it go out of my mind afterwards, but I thought of it again this afternoon. Dad doesn't know how much he's got. I asked him once and he put me off — he wouldn't answer. I see now what the matter was. *He didn't know!*" said Sandra, sure that this would definitely establish the gravity of her father's case. "He doesn't know this minute, how much he has to live on — where he *stands*, you know."

To her surprise the other's optimism (real or assumed for her benefit) stood the test even of this damaging revelation. "That's nothing! Dozens of men can't tell off-hand how much they have. They don't keep account of everything down to the last cent; you really can't. I wouldn't think anything of that."

"Don't *you* know?"

"Well, I'm on a salary, I can't help but know," said Samuel uncomfortably, feeling himself cornered. "A man running a business is different."

Sandra shook her head. "You can't make me believe that. Nobody could get along that way," she said with the appalling logic of a woman; and returned to her theme. "I know you don't approve of women working, but if you just stop to think you can see how much better

it will be for me to be independent. It wouldn't be right for me to stay at home and let things go on just as they are until Dad — until something happens. I *couldn't* do it. I won't be a drag. Even if I don't do anything except help to take care of myself — and I *want* to help take care of Mother and Grandma too, of course — but even if I don't do anything but support myself, it will be better than nothing."

The young man listened to her again dismally silent, beholding his own dreams fade off, dwindle to the vanishing-point. Was ever woman in this humour wooed? She was obsessed with this independence-and-save-Father idea; and after all that was just like her. It was nonsense, but it was splendid. He drew a long sigh.

"Well, of course — if that's how you feel — Only I hate to think of you driving away in one of these frowzy old offices all day long, Sandra — oh, I — I beg your pardon — I — er —"

"Why, I don't mind. We always used to call each other by our first names when we were at school. I don't mind a bit," she assured him so kindly and unconcernedly that poor Sam's last spark of hope flickered out. "I'll call you by yours, if you like. Shall I?"

"I would — ever so much —"

"All right!" He looked so forlorn and was so manifestly safe now that Sandra felt impelled to more confidences. "You don't need to feel badly about my going into an office either, because I don't think I'll be in an office. I don't like the idea myself. And besides I haven't had any office training, and it would take a good while to learn. I thought it would be better to start doing something that I *could* do right away. So I — I'm going to dance."

"What!" shouted Sam.

"Sh-h, they might hear you," said Sandra with another warning glance towards the next room. And even in his consternation the young man felt a delicious thrill when she added not without a faint embarrassment: "You see they don't know yet. You're the first person I've told — Sam."

CHAPTER X

SANDRA, except in one or two particulars, had not been very wide of the mark in her forecast of the way in which the family would receive her project. She was prepared for her mother's incredulity advancing through successive stages of alarm, dismay and distress to a certainty that was still somehow desperately incredulous. For the poor lady, it was if the old tale had been reversed, and her swan had developed into an ugly duckling at the last; she was more disappointed than actually grieved or shocked. Mrs. Richard was reasonably progressive; she had indeed surmounted some of the prejudices of her generation almost without knowing it. It no longer appeared to her dreadful or deplorable that a young woman of her own class should go out and work whether by choice or necessity. Too many of her own friends' girls went to college or to special courses here at home, even in such bizarre branches as sewing and cookery, avowedly to prepare themselves to face the world "in case anything happened." Too many of them, going a step farther afterwards, took positions, teacher here, librarian there, secretary elsewhere, acts which their mothers explained as due to Gladys' or Janet's or Mary Jane's restlessness, to her ambition or eccentricity — when they did not bluntly set it down to the young woman's desire for more pocket-money than her father could afford to give her. Mrs. Boardman, listening, never failed to show exactly the right amount and quality of interest; she would be surprised or amused or indulgent in accord-

ance with the other mother's attitude. She was well up in all the stock phrases: the young people did very strange things nowadays; but the world moves, we must move with it; at any rate, let us not be stumbling-blocks, hobble-chains, old fogies! These were Mrs. Richard's publicly expressed sentiments, and she honestly believed that she believed them. The truth was that in her heart of hearts, Sandra's mother, along with dozens of other mothers who made just as good a show of being prodigiously up-to-date, clung invincibly to the ancient creed of women, that a girl's business in life was to get married. All this talk about Gladys and Janet and Mary Jane being restless, being ambitious, being independent, being tired of society, was stuff and nonsense, mere excuses, vamped up to save their faces. The real trouble was that they had missed their chances; old-maidhood was imminent, was upon them already; they were failures!

Now here was Sandra proposing to join their ranks! Everybody would think that she had never had an offer, and had grown tired of sitting around waiting, Mrs. Richard reflected bitterly. And she herself must go about reciting those stories about restlessness, independence and so on, which nobody would believe, but which all would hear with the humane good breeding she had always practised. That her report would be true, and that, by inference, the other mothers' reports might be true too, did not enter into her considerations. Even Sandra's choice of a profession, outlandish as it was, affected the mother, as it were, incidentally; she raised objections on that score, of course, but her real concern was not over Sandra's dancing.

Sandra knew it; she knew every thought in her mother's head, and alas, it may be doubted if she set an overhigh value on them. With her father, it was different; the

girl was a little frightened at first by the ease with which she won him; it confirmed her, it confirmed Mr. Thatcher, too emphatically. To be sure she was not absolutely frank with him; he did not quite know what she meant to do, or why; she could not tell him — poor father! In truth, others besides poor father might have found Sandra's halting and ambiguous exposition somewhat difficult to follow; it was not natural to her to be indirect.

"As I understand it, Sandra, you want to go to New York and take a course in fancy dancing at some school or with one of these star dancers that have been going around the country so much here lately — Russians and French and all the rest of them," said Richard at last. He pondered. "Well now, I guess you can do that. Only your mother or somebody will have to go and be with you, won't she? New York isn't much of a place for a girl — you've never been there by yourself in your life. It will be very different. And dancing — well — I don't know what sort of people you will be thrown with. It wouldn't have done at all twenty-five years ago. There has been a great change, I know —"

Sandra began eager explanations and assurances — the more eager because here at least was a point on which she could speak openly, and he listened to her with an occasional nod of understanding; also he looked over the circulars without disapproval, in fact with lively interest.

"Very straightforward and business-like, aren't they? Like any other school prospectus!" he said in surprise. "Seems funny. I can't get over the idea that dancing isn't a *study*, let alone an art or a science or whatever they call it nowadays. We all used to think that you only went to dancing-school when you were a little tad — eight or ten years old, along there. But goodness gracious, listen to this!" And here Mr. Boardman read aloud from one

of the pamphlets with thorough relish: " ' One of the vital accomplishments by which men, women and children are measured is their mastery of Dancing which brings to the surface the highest standards of magnetic personality. . . . It introduces into the actions of an individual a mental and physical tone which is the result of no other form of education.' My, my, think of dancing doing all that for you! I begin to regret my misspent youth, merely learning to read and write. And what's this? ' A few common terms used in Buck, Clog, Jig and Reel Dancing: Slap Step, Hopping Beat, Pick up Tap, Single Roll, Double Roll, Cutting Shuffle, Flam.' My, my," said Richard again, solemnly. "Are you going to come back to us from New York with your magnetic personality augmented by knowing how to — to *Flam*?"

Sandra laughed with him, though uncertain whether she resented or was glad of, the very apparent fact that he was not taking her seriously. "I'll *show* him — I'll show them all some day!" she thought almost fiercely, but only said: "I can clog a little already. That course must be intended mainly for men, anyhow."

"*Men!*" repeated her father. "Well, of course they have to go to school and learn too, if they are going to make a trade of it," he added on second thought. "But of all queer ways for a *man* to earn his living!"

"That's what Ev says," said Sandra. "But some of them make a great deal of money, you know, Dad."

Her father glanced into the young face, smiling; but at something he saw there, some un-girlish and most un-Sandra-like hardness or coldness, the smile vanished. It came to him that he did not know, he could not even guess at what was going on within the little smooth dark head that was so infinitely, dear; for one painful instant he sat

beside his own child as if in the company of a stranger, and felt the essential isolation of every human being.

"It isn't so easy and cheap as Ev thinks," said Sandra, her eyes on the cut of Benson and Mazie, Eccentric Soft-Shoe Team, extraordinarily interlaced, so that it was impossible to assign their respective arms and legs. "You have to *work*; you have to do your best all the time. And somehow, Dad," she went on with sudden vehemence, "you never seem to be doing your best, no matter how hard you try. I've often felt that when I've been dancing — doing a dance on the stage before people, you know."

"You dance beautifully, Sandra," said her father, fondly.

"I know, I know!" She made an impatient gesture. "I can dance — yes! But I never seem to myself quite to — to *get there*. It's strange," said Sandra, meditatively. "I feel perfectly confident that I can do it, and yet all the while deep down in my heart, I know that I can't ever do it!"

"I'll have to give that up. It's too profound a proposition for me," said Richard, wagging his head, whereat Sandra laughed or pretended to laugh, inwardly berating herself soundly. She never could make anybody understand how she felt about her dancing; it was silly to try, silly to talk about it at all.

Everett had not only said what Sandra reported, he had said a great deal more in as severe language as he could bring himself to use to a girl — his own sister at that. According to him, the whole idea of this experiment was outrageous. Dancing-lessons? What did Sandra want with more dancing-lessons? Why should she go and mix herself up with a lot of second-rate people, in a big city where she didn't know anybody, and would have no one to look after her? "Profession? Oh, stuff!" he said

when Sandra tentatively presented that view. "You couldn't ever follow it as a profession. It isn't the sort of thing that *you* could do. Girls from families like ours do sometimes go on the stage, of course, but not as dancers. You might as well be a circus-rider. I daresay Genée and Pavlova and the others come of decent enough people, but not *our* kind. Of course, they are great artists, and it wouldn't make any difference where they came from," said Everett, liberally. "But *you* — why, it's preposterous! If you want to fit yourself for doing something, if anything happened so that you'd have to, for Heaven's sake, take up something such as the rest of the girls go into. Teaching, or —"

"Teaching? What could I teach?" cried out Sandra. "Everybody always pokes teaching at a girl, or book-keeping or shorthand, something like that, regardless of what she's fitted for or has a taste for. It saves time to go ahead with something that you know a little about already."

"There isn't any question of saving time in your case, though. You don't have to do anything, and you won't ever have to as long as Father and I are here to take care of you," said Everett; and he added with forbearance and dignity: "Of course the time may come when we can't give you everything you want; something might happen. But in the meanwhile, it seems to me you might think of us a little, and not do these extreme things that make everybody talk."

Sandra was silent; not, indeed, that his argument had caused her to change her mind in the least. Perhaps that remark about great artists stung her into a more stubborn determination than ever; she would *show* him. But at the moment there did not seem to be anything to say. He made her feel herself an ungrateful creature, doggedly

sacrificing everybody to her own selfish whims; yet conscience timidly assured her that she was nothing of the sort. Everett, so far from "taking care" of her, had never hitherto given her a penny, but Sandra, even when she remembered that fact, did not dream of retorting upon him with it; she would have thought it vulgar and mean; Everett meant to give to her when he made enough so that he could afford it.

Mrs. Alexander heard what was afoot with her habitual philosophical urbanity, her first concern being, like Richard's, the practical one as to where and with whom her granddaughter would be. But when Sandra, colouring faintly, told her that she thought of being with a sister of Mr. Thatcher's, the old lady, for once in her life, looked in utter bewilderment.

"A sister of Mr. Thatcher's?" she echoed. "Does your mother know her? I had no idea you were at all intimate with the Thatchers — except, of course, this young Mr. Thatcher that comes here — the one named Sam. Is it his family you are going to visit? Or does the sister take boarders?"

"No, no!" said Sandra, laughing awkwardly, disturbed to feel her face getting redder still. "I didn't put it very clearly. It's that Mr. Thatcher's sister I'm talking about — Miss Kate Thatcher — but I'm not going to stay with her, and she doesn't keep a boarding-house. She herself boards, and I thought I would board in the same house. I don't know her, but he — I mean Mr. Thatcher — thought I might like to be near her. She's a good deal older than I am, and she knows all about New York — she's lived there for years. She has a position in a school, and —"

"A *private* school?" her mother asked keenly.

"Yes. It's all right, Mother, I'm sure she's nice —"

"One of the thousand-a-year kind?" pursued Mrs. Richard.

"Yes, oh yes!" said Sandra, who knew nothing whatever about it, fibbing desperately. She wondered to find herself, with the most honest and honourable of purposes, involved in this web of small deceits; it did not seem possible to tell the family the whole truth, even about insignificant details; they would not understand; she could hear in fancy the outcry they would raise. Maybe some day when she had conquered all the other obstacles and had reached a point where nothing she did would be questioned and her antecedents would not matter any more than Genèe's or Pavlova's, when she had become a "great artist" in short — maybe then she could confide in her mother and the rest. It was doubtless one of life's little ironic adjustments that there were moments when Miss Alexandra Boardman wished vehemently that she had been born Smith or Schwartz or anything you please, the daughter of a groceryman, a tailor, a hotel-keeper! "Then I could do anything I wanted without having to be eternally explaining and telling stories. People like that don't care!" she thought.

"Oh, well then, it must be one of those finishing-schools, where the girls are generally nice — not that the rate of tuition has anything to do with it, of course. It merely gives one something to judge by," said Sandra's mother, satisfied. "They have to keep the teachers up to a high standard, too. Miss Thatcher is probably accustomed to chaperoning girls like yourself, Sandra —"

"I don't expect her to chaperon me. I'm nearly twenty-five and if I don't know enough to go around by myself now, I'll never learn," said Sandra with an asperity born of distaste for her position.

Mrs. Richard looked both shocked and hurt for a second,

then another thought made her smile. "Well, to be sure, when I was that age, I wouldn't have thanked any one who wanted to chaperon me," she said leniently. "But I had been married five years and had two children. You are a girl still, you see. I suppose you really are old enough — only you always seem so young to me."

"How long do you think you will be away, Sandra?" her grandmother asked.

"I don't know," said the girl, with a fresh sense of guilt. "It depends on — on what kind of a course I decide to take. They have three-month ones, and six-months — different kinds — it's like any other school, you know."

"And then what?" asked the old lady. Her black eyes rested on the girl with disquieting penetration. "Is this an experiment, or an adventure, or a — a prelude?"

"Maybe it's a little of all three," said Sandra, truthfully enough. "How can I tell what it's going to turn out?"

Mrs. Alexander asked no more questions at that time; in fact she contrived, in her unobtrusive way, to intervene between Sandra and the curiosity, the suspicious astonishment of their world. It was amusing. The old gentlewoman sat invincible within her fortress of Victorian good manners, and inquiry retired from the attack not only baffled but convicted of vulgarity. Yet she never snubbed anybody, never gave offence, never was evasive, or embarrassed, or formal or affected. Sandra, belonging to a generation not so thoroughly versed in these subtleties of behaviour, witnessed her senior's performances with increasing confidence that "you could tell Grandma anything." So that, when the older lady one day when they happened to be alone together, said: "What is it you are really planning to do, Sandra?" the girl answered her fully and freely.

If Mrs. Boardman was surprised or scandalized, she justified Sandra's belief in her, by not showing it. After a while she said: "I don't think the family quite realizes this. Of course outsiders don't. But your father and mother —"

"I can't tell them. They wouldn't —"

Mrs. Boardman waved her hand. "I understand," she said, conclusively.

"You — you suspected something anyhow, didn't you?"

"Well — perhaps," Mrs. Boardman admitted. She considered for another while. "In the old days, dancers — Taglioni, Fannie Ellsler, all of them, high and low — were women of 'no reputation' as we used to say. We thought the same of actresses — of any woman in public life. We thought a dancing-teacher was one remove from a barber or man-cook. We profess to have outgrown all those ideas, but I think so still —"

"There, you see! I can't make any of you understand, not even you. That's the reason I haven't told them. There's no use," said Sandra, grimly.

"No, I suppose there isn't any use, since I myself can't get rid of these old ingrained beliefs. They are just like any other beliefs — they haven't anything to do with reason or common-sense," said the old lady. "I was brought up to think that Methodists were very common people, who went bawling around about their spiritual experiences in the worst possible taste, and addressed the Creator with offensive familiarity. Well, I daresay Methodists don't do those things any more: maybe they never did: but I still think Methodists are very common people! In the same way I still think that ballet dancers are dreadful young women, whereas nowadays they may be as respectable as I am!"

"Oh, but I'm not going to be an ordinary ballet-dancer, Grandma!" Sandra protested, not without temper.

"Oh! I thought they all had to begin in the ranks," said Mrs. Alexander. "Another misconception! Another prejudice!" she remarked, polishing her eyeglasses.

"Why yes, of course, when they dance in that style — toe-dancing. But I'm different — that's not what I intend to do at all," Sandra explained heatedly. "There're ever so many styles of dancing. Why, you *know* that!"

"Yes, to be sure — I should have remembered," said Mrs. Boardman, and veered away to a safer topic. "But after you get through your — er — your studies, you do expect to dance publicly?"

"If I can get an engagement, yes indeed!" said Sandra. "Gracious, I've danced in public often enough as an amateur. Why shouldn't I do it professionally? The audience doesn't care, so long as it thinks it's getting its money's worth. But Dad and Mother and Everett don't know; I'm afraid to tell them. They think I just want to be *doing* something. And perhaps after all I may end by just teaching dancing; I may make a failure on the stage," Sandra ended as if in warning to herself. Whatever her other limitations, at least she had in some measure the artist's equipment of mingled self-confidence and humility.

The preparations went forward, their simplicity appalling Mrs. Richard whose visits to New York had always necessitated lengthy negotiations about clothes, accommodations and what-not. But Sandra stood firm; there must be nothing new, no hats, no dresses; she would have the plain room in the plain boarding-house on the plain side-street where "nobody" lived and "nobody" ever went. As it was, her expenses would be heavy enough; some day she might be able to pay Dad back —

"Sandra! You talk like a working-girl!" her mother

interposed, horrified. "Your father would feel terribly to hear you. You mustn't say anything like that to him — about paying him back! You mustn't make such a fuss about money; it's — it's sordid — it's —"

"Well, I'm playing at being a working-girl for a while, you know, Mother," said Sandra, quickly, regretting her unwary confidences, smoothing the matter over as best she might. "I — I was just in fun. Be careful now, Mrs. Boardman, I'm going to wool you around!"

The day before she went, Sam Thatcher came in the smart runabout he had lately treated himself to, and besought her so earnestly, that Sandra yielded against her wiser judgment, and ran upstairs and got her last-season's motor-coat, her old hat that her mother had fruitlessly implored her to throw away, and went out with him. "He'll be so busy with the gears and things, he won't have any chance to get foolish," she thought. In fact, Samuel was quite silent and preoccupied during the first part of the ride. They went out Adams Road to the open country. It was November, and the trees and hillsides showed everywhere a hectic brightness of the passing year. Troops of children were out nutting; they met a company of boy-scouts on a hike; and further along at a crossroads came upon the spectacle of a brother runabout inert by the road, with another couple like themselves standing over it as at the bedside of a dying or dead friend.

"Engine's gone on the blink," the young man explained succinctly, when Sam, who was of a humane disposition, slowed down to inquire what was the matter, and if he might be of any use. "I can't locate the trouble; she just naturally laid down. Look here!" He stooped to the crank and heaved it around with might and main; a feeble mutter arose, swelled, died away convulsively somewhere within the mechanism; the car somehow took on a more

corpse-like aspect than ever. Its owner straightened up, looking at Sam obliquely with a species of solemn grin. "The gyasticutas is out of connection with the hew-gag," said he. "That's the way *I* figure it!"

"Let me try," said Sam, feeling himself challenged. He jumped out and applied his whole strength to the crank-ing-up process — with precisely the same result.

"Nix!" said the other, watching him.

"You are a stranger around here?" Sam asked him.

"More or less. We're touring — that is, we were touring until we took to standing still."

"Well, I was going to say that you aren't too far out to telephone to the city and get a mechanic here; it wouldn't take him an hour. All these farmhouses have telephones —"

"I thought about that," said the other young man; "But I don't like to go off hunting a telephone, and leave my wife sitting here all by herself; she'd be scared to, any-way. And she's no good at walking —"

"Shoo, I'd just as lief, Charlie," interrupted the young woman. "He just thinks I can't walk because I've got high heels on," she added to Sandra with a confidential smile. "Ain't that *man* all over, though!"

"Yeah, I've heard that before, and you have too, likely," said the husband, looking at Sam. He plunged both hands down in his pockets and surveyed the automobile philosophically. "Here," said he, "is where the first farmer that comes along with a team gets ahead about twenty-five bucks —"

"Twenty-five! Why don't you hire a farmer? You don't have to buy one!" said Sam.

"I guess you've never had much experience with the merry, merry rustics," the other retorted, obscurely. "Here come some of 'em now!"

They were not farmers, however, but the band of boy-scouts. They came up, alertly proffering assistance, half a dozen tanned, sturdy twelve-year-olds in their khaki and their little tramping boots of which they were visibly proud, with a serious-faced older boy in spectacles for a leader. And altogether, Sam lending a hand, they propelled the machine off of the "right of way" as the boys called it with a great display of technical knowledge; after which first one, and then another attempted to 'turn her over' — another technicality — the engine steadily refusing to be turned over. So finally at Sam's suggestion, a scout perched on the running-board of his car, to be transported to the nearest telephone; Sam climbed in and settled himself at the wheel; the boy with the spectacles obligingly cranked for him; the remaining scouts, led by the young man and his wife, gave them a burlesque cheer. Looking back from the next rise, Sandra could see them all sitting in a row on the rail fence, cheerfully patient to see the affair through.

"It's nice of you boys to help people this way," she said to their scout warmly. "I suppose that's what the organization is for, though, isn't it?"

"Yeah. It's for 'most anything," said the scout, vaguely. "Gee, I wisht they'd have a war, though! What make's this machine, mister?"

They set him down at the first farmhouse, and after a conference with an old woman at the side-door, he shrilly reported that "th' folks had a 'phone all right." They went on.

"Those were nice people," said Sam, turning the wheel. "Lots of men would have been swearing till the air was blue, but he took it as a kind of a joke. And those boys. Nice people. You meet all kinds, going around as much as I do, but they're mostly nice, I think. And it's funny

how everybody gets together to help, if there's trouble. You don't have to run around and drum them up; everybody pitches in, and helps the one nearest him, without being told. It seems to be instinctive. I was in a train-wreck once —" he was abruptly silent, having perhaps evoked dread memories and pictures.

Sandra had thought the stranded tourists rather common; their very good-nature and hail-fellow-well-met friendliness stamped them of the lower caste. She had been about to say so, but now some better feeling withheld her. It may have been that through Sam's uncalculated words, as through the flickering of a camera-shutter, she glimpsed the world unrecognizably illuminated, or another world the existence of which she had only lately begun to suspect.

"I hope they'll get the mechanic, and get their machine fixed," she said. "Oughtn't we to turn back here — to go back, you know?"

Sam obediently swung the car around, though he said: "Why, we haven't gone any distance. Are you tired?"

"No, I love it! But it's my last day at home. I feel as if I shouldn't stay away too long."

"No telling when I'll see you again, either," said Sam. And then, on a sudden, without leading up to it, comparable to the bolt from the blue of which we have all heard: "I didn't say anything when you first told me — that night" — he said huskily; "I was going to ask you then, but it didn't seem as if there was any use, after the way you talked and felt. I — I wish you'd give up this dancing scheme, Sandra, and — and marry me."

"Oh, I can't do that, Sam," said the girl, much troubled. "I can't do that."

"Why not? Is there somebody else?"

"No, no, but —"

"You just don't care about me, is that it?" said Sam, bravely.

"I'm — I'm afraid I don't," Sandra said, not knowing whether she spoke the truth or not; tears came into her eyes. "I didn't want you to — I hate to have you think — I mean I didn't mean —" she stammered, almost sobbing.

"That's all right, I know you didn't mean to," said Sam, miraculously comprehending. "You're not that sort of a girl. And you couldn't have stopped me anyhow, Sandra — I couldn't have stopped myself. But don't you think maybe some day —?"

"I don't know," Sandra said. And with such meagre comfort as he could get from that half-admission, Samuel had to be content.

She went to bed early that night; and after a while Mrs. Alexander Boardman, going quietly upstairs, stopped at her granddaughter's door and looked in. There was some disorder; Sandra's trunk had already gone, but her little valise stood open on a chair, waiting for the last odds and ends; there were her gloves and hat and her nattily rolled umbrella laid together. Mrs. Alexander went in a step; by the light from the hall she could see Sandra sound asleep, with her long, thick, black hair braided and tied up in a ribbon, lying across the pillow; she looked very small and young. On the night-stand beside the bed, there was the watch her father had given her on her nineteenth birthday, a girl's watch that never kept time, a foolish elegant trifle; and there was a half-eaten apple which she had probably been too sleepy to finish. Somehow these things, this inefficient watch, this apple with a bite or two out of it, suddenly seemed to the old lady poignantly pathetic; a hundred times she had seen Sandra thus in her crib, with a toy, a cooky alongside; Richard too, when he was a baby. Old

Sarah Chase Boardman, whose past, like everybody's past, must have held some unpleasing chapters, who went to church and subscribed to charities and practised an unswerving courtesy all for no better reason than because it appeared to her the part of a lady, who believed nothing about God save that, if He existed, He must surely be a gentleman — old Sarah Boardman got down on her knees then and there and put up some lame petition for this young girl.

Mrs. Richard, passing by, saw her in the attitude with surprise and alarm. "Good gracious, Mother, what is the matter?" she wanted to know, in a guarded voice.

"Nothing," said Mrs. Alexander, rising stiffly. "I dropped my little gold pin. Never mind, Lucy, I found it, thank you!"

PART II

CHAPTER I

MISS BOARDMAN'S principal emotion during her journey to the metropolis and in the first days of her establishment there, was one of wonder and satisfaction at the discovery that a girl of her "set" could travel about this country unchaperoned by her mother, unprotected by any male member of her family, under nobody's wing, in short, without finding herself disagreeably conspicuous, and without the slightest difficulty in making arrangements about her tickets, her berth, her baggage, all the supposedly intricate details which hitherto somebody had always attended to for her. Never in her life had Alexandra been allowed to go fifty miles from home by herself; never in her life had she been ultimately responsible for a dollar, and here she was in the city of New York, with the banking-association cheques her father had given her still unscathed in her handbag, with all the porters and baggage-men properly tipped, her telegrams to the anxious people at home despatched, her hat on the bed, her trunk unstrapped, herself in as good order outwardly as if she had been managing her own affairs since her cradle! Inwardly, to be sure, she quaked with the sense of adventure and loneliness; but Sandra was not likely to betray herself. Indeed, she scarcely would have known how; self-possession is the first commandment taught, the first habit acquired by young women of her class, and in the end it becomes second nature. Besides, with all her funny pride in the capability she had shown thus far, the girl had enough sense of humour to realize that the achievement of coming all the way to New York by herself was nothing

to startle the world with — not the world wherein she must dwell, at all events. "An ordinary working-girl wouldn't think anything of it; they go around alone all the time," she warned herself; "and a girl like that wouldn't have taken a taxi from the station; she'd have walked and carried her bag and things, and saved fifty cents. I'll do that another time. It's queer, I have to keep reminding myself that I'm in earnest about this thing. It seems as if it couldn't be true somehow."

Her gaze wandered around the room. There was no lack of atmosphere about it, at any rate; it was the classic resort of youthful poverty and ambition, a hall bedroom. Next to a garret there is no locality better known to romance. Nevertheless, this was a hall bedroom *de luxe* as one might say, a ten-dollar-a-week hall bedroom; by Boardman standards, it was the last word in economy. There was a window in one end of it, the door in the other, and between, ranged along the parallel walls, on one side a small wardrobe, an iron cot-bed, a desk; on the other a chest of drawers, a wash-stand, Sandra's trunk. There was space for a single chair, and Sandra calculated that in the aisle between these articles of furniture she might practise any dance-step that did not require too much posturing. From the window one looked down into a brick-paved cubicle, with a locust-tree growing grimly out of a grimy depression in the middle of it, upon the brick walls crowned with broken glass which divided the hollow of the square into other cubicles, upon the other rear windows, and the roofs of extensions to the first and second stories of the buildings. Sandra was up two flights of stairs from the parlour-floor, and there were more flights both above and below. Mounting the high front steps, she had caught glimpses of faces and furnishings in the basement; and now and again feet sped up the padded stairs outside her

door to unguessed destinations overhead. The arrangement recalled the circles of the Inferno, and perhaps there were other points of resemblance. But to Sandra, coming from her city of the Middle West with its hill-tops where "everybody" lived, among lawns and trees, the New York boarding-house was an entertaining novelty; indeed, she had made up her mind to be interested in everything.

A card on the white-painted walls of her cell notified her that the hours for meals were such and such, that there would be an extra charge of twenty-five cents for trays carried to the rooms, and that guests were under no circumstances allowed to do laundry-work in the bathrooms. This last Sandra found infinitely diverting; as if anybody could possibly want to wash anything in a boarding-house bathroom! She told her grandmother about it in the letter she was just writing . . . "As this is Sunday, dinner is at one o'clock; but when I dressed and went down there were very few people there, and no Miss Thatcher. Mrs. Tower says she is out of town for the week-end. The dining-room is a great, huge place with the walls all covered with weird-looking fret-work of dark wood with mirrors set in everywhere, rather like an old-style Pullman car. I don't recognize the wood, so it's probably what Dad calls 'solid pannyjambia.' We have little tables for two or four, which is much nicer than I expected, with a little pressed-glass candlestick and a candle with a frowsy pink silk shade, on each table — terribly stylish! I had my table all to myself, in fact, I had the whole dining-room to myself for a while, and I heard Mrs. Tower shouting at the servants in the pantry and sharpening a carving-knife with a perfectly ferocious sound. I know it was she and I know she did the carving, for all the noise stopped the minute she came into the dining-room, looking very warm and wiping her face. And right

after that I got a grand, big slab of rare roast beef, lukewarm, to be sure, but good enough. I am telling you this so that Mother can see I'm being properly '*nourished*' as all the hygiene books say. Mrs. Tower is stout and grey-haired, about fifty, I think, and looks as if she had been keeping a boarding-house the whole fifty years, ever since she was born. The only other 'guests' were a man and his wife and daughter (I suppose) very common all of them, with the same look that Mrs. Tower has, only the other side. I mean, as if they had boarded all their lives. Mrs. Tower herself has a round table in the bay-window with a big-nosed girl, and a big-nosed young man sitting with her. They seem like a family-party, and I heard the girl call Mrs. Tower 'Auntie Lou' but the man didn't say anything but 'you' to either one of them, so I couldn't make out whether he and the girl were married or engaged or nothing, just brother and sister.

"Tomorrow I am going over to 36th Street, to the Claude School (the one I have been corresponding with, you know) to see what it looks like and what M. and Mme. Claude are like, and to make an appointment for an entrance examination. I think I will take my ballet-slippers and other things in my suitcase as the place isn't far from here, and I can easily carry them, and they may be ready to see me dance at once. Their prospectus says that entrance examinations are optional with the student, so I *op* to take one; the idea is that they can tell how you dance simply by looking at you, I suppose, but it must be very seldom that they get anybody like me. I thought I would take that MacDowell music, *Oreadentanz*, and the music for one of those dances I made up myself, the Scherzo from the Fifth Symphony, maybe. I think those are the best things I do; only hope they'll have somebody there that can play them for me! The costumes look

rather stringy from being packed, especially the Oread's green chiffon, and her wreath of oak-leaves is flattened out like this sheet of paper, but I think I can work it back into shape again, or pin it around my head so that it will look all right, and chiffon blows and floats around so, that it doesn't make much difference if it is stringy . . .

"*Later*, nine o'clock this evening. I've met Miss Thatcher. She came back in time for Sunday evening tea, and came and tapped at my door, before she had taken any of her things off, just as I was getting the costumes out. She is *very nice*! I don't know why I was so surprised; I must have been expecting her to be prim and teacher-y. Of course she is old, thirty-five, at least, but she doesn't show it much, and was dressed in beautiful taste, a black suit that must have been made by Sampson or some other good Fifth Avenue tailor, and perfectly lovely black furs, and a hat that suited her and was put on right. She has red hair, and a darling little figure — such tiny hands and feet, and wears eyeglasses. It sounds funny to say it, but I was a good deal relieved; this place had seemed rather awful at first, but when I saw Miss Thatcher, I thought, 'Well, if she can stand it, I ought to be able to!' I told her so, and she laughed and said that she had lived here several years, and that it was as good as any New York boarding-house could be! that is, one could endure it! The big-nosed man and the big-nosed girl aren't related to each other, and they aren't married yet, but they are going to be as soon as he makes enough. His name is Gus Beckley and he is a book-keeper at Mc. Chesney's, and hers is Mary Schultze and she is a stenographer in some lawyer's office. It seems almost everybody in the house — *all* the women, Miss Thatcher says — does something, some kind of work, I mean. Miss

Thatcher says there are always a good many women, because people like that somehow drift together in places like this; women hardly ever make money enough to have homes of their own, she says . . . You see we had a grand time gossiping about the other boarders, but it was my own doing, really; I asked her to tell me. I wonder what they will say when they hear what *I* do. Miss Thatcher didn't seem to think anything of it, one way or the other. She just said, 'I understand from my brother that you are taking up dancing,' and went on talking about something else. Of course she may feel that she doesn't know me well enough to say anything; or perhaps she simply isn't interested, anyhow. . . . Afterwards at tea, I half expected that she would come and sit with me, or offer to, but she didn't; just smiled in a pleasant, cool way, and went past to her own table. All the other people were there and some more, but nobody paid any attention to me. For that matter I noticed that very few of them paid any attention to the others anyhow; just one person here and there spoke to somebody else at another table, or nodded as Miss Thatcher did to me. It's so odd. I thought that everybody in boarding-houses always got very friendly right away; Mother kept warning me against that, you know; she thought it would be such an annoyance. But if they keep on like this, she doesn't need to worry . . ."

Possibly Miss Alexandra Boardman who was one of *the* Boardmans whom "everybody" knew or knew of, whose doings were of not inconsiderable interest to society, whose acquaintance had been more or less diligently sought by people not so fortunately placed — possibly, I say, the young lady went to bed that night feeling rather lonesome. It may be that she would not have frowned upon those annoying advances which her mother feared; one may read

a certain naïve surprise and discomfiture in the tone with which she announces her discoveries. And it is a fact that although she had proclaimed vigorously before leaving home that she would have no time to look up any of the school-friends or ex-residents of her native city, now living in New York, and did not expect to see or hear of them, Sandra planned calls upon half a dozen before she fell asleep! However, the morning almost always brings fresh council; and she got up and dressed and packed her chiffons and went downstairs to breakfast with her normal views and attitude fully restored, so that she received the tentative smile of the big-nosed girl with a distant courtesy which ought effectually to discourage that variety of annoyance, though carefully graded so as not to hurt the other's feelings. Her brother Everett himself could have done no better!

The Claude School was housed in another tall, narrow, four-stories-and-basement building, with a façade of grey stone; the lower ranges of windows opened inwards with long casements, and there was a further decoration of stone balustraded balconies and small, pointed, dusty Christmas-trees in stone pots. It was entered from the sidewalk level by two doors; Sandra read on a typewritten slip pasted to the glass panes in the upper part of the first door she came to: "Sam Lippert company rehearsing take the other entrance." Not being a member of the Sam Lippert company, she rang, and the door was opened by a charwoman with a bucket and rag. Within there was a Pompeian looking vestibule with a mosaic floor, a fountain in the middle of it, a stone bench, a pair of wrought-iron torchères, all in a space not more than eight feet square; and closing up the vista, a flight of steps up to a landing with rails enclosing a desk and stool, a green-shaded electric light, and other accessories which reminded one rather

too pointedly of a ticket-office. On the heels of the charwoman there came from some cellar-like retreat behind the steps a girl about Sandra's own age, with a tremendous supply of light auburn hair arranged in too advanced a mode to suit Miss Boardman's fastidious taste, and with furthermore a wide mouth, a salient nose and a look of race so pronounced that Sandra was not at all surprised on hearing later that her name was Alma Marx. She surveyed the newcomer with an impersonal interest.

"This is the Claude School?" asked Sandra, in some uncertainty.

"Yes. I'm the secretary. What is it, please?"

"Oh, the secretary? Oh, then, you know about me already. I'm Miss Boardman," said Sandra ingenuously supposing this to be a complete introduction.

"Miss —? Beg pardon?" said the other girl, with a blank look. Her face brightened a little, however, when Sandra reminded her of their correspondence. "Miss Boardman! Oh, yes, I remember! Let's see, you're from out West somewhere — Kansas City, isn't it?"

Sandra corrected her, with a return of last night's oddly discomfited sensation. "Of course you have so many applications, you can't remember all of us," she said, trying to laugh.

"No, indeed!" assented the secretary pleasantly; and she nimbly mounted the rostrum at the top of the steps. "What course was it you wanted to take? I guess it was the regular one wasn't it? That's twenty-five dollars for the first week, and fifteen a week afterwards; that takes in everything, you know." She opened a ledger, got a pen in readiness, patted down her blonde coiffure, all with highly efficient movements, and gave Sandra a wide smile amiable though perfunctory.

"Well, I — I expected to see Mr. or Mrs. Claude first,"

stammered Sandra, "I thought they ought to see me dance —"

"Oh, they aren't here — they're in Europe. It's their school still, but they don't come here any more," Miss Marx explained unconcernedly. She seemed to have acquired a masterly detachment, owing, without doubt, to her vocation; no display of ignorance, no outlandish requests or behaviour could move her to curiosity or impatience or amusement. "Mr. de Voyna's here, of course. He has the ballet class. If you had one of our folders, you saw about Mrs. Perry's work — the interpretative and pantomime, you know — Mrs. Elaine Perry. That's part of Mrs. Palmer's course — she gives that and the social dancing. It all comes in the twenty-five dollars — beginning with twenty-five, I mean. That's the one everybody takes, because of getting so much, you see. It's two hours practice-class every day except Saturdays and Sundays. Unless you want to take something special — private lessons, you know."

Sandra stood for an instant, dumb before this cataract of information. All at once she saw herself, and her aspirations, and her local celebrity, and her suitcase full of costumes dwindling to something less even than absurdities. "Who gives the private lessons?" she finally managed to inquire.

"You can have 'em of any of the instructors," said the other girl. "Ten dollars an hour, one person, one lesson, you know. That's from Mr. de Voyna. Of course ball-room dancing is less — six for thirty. You see how much more you get for your money, the other way. We advise everybody to take the regular course. Not that it makes any difference to us; we just consider it's for your best interests, you know. You can take anything you want. You a teacher?"

"I — I thought of teaching," said Sandra, meekly.

"Well, the regular course is what you want, then."

Sandra uttered her thought aloud. "I suppose I'll have to make a beginning somehow. It will be the same everywhere," she said, in a confusion of disappointment, irresolution and doubt. Nothing could be simpler, easier of comprehension, or more reasonable than the proposals of the Claude School; but nothing could have been more different from what Sandra had expected, and rehearsed in imagination. If it was to be merely a matter of going to dancing-school she might as well have stayed at home, and kept on with Mademoiselle Mantegna, the girl thought in a kind of vexed derision of herself. She was helplessly aware that she had thought nothing out in detail beforehand, for all the fancied thoroughness of her preparations; and what was worse, an ignorance and inexperience which loomed more monumental every moment kept her from thinking at all to the point now. She did not know what to do, and stood aghast at her own indecision. Yet it seemed imperative that she must make up her mind somehow; truly she had never before believed that time was money, but with every second that went by leaving her idle, Sandra felt the force of that homely aphorism.

"Oh, yes, the rates are the same, but you don't get near so much at the other schools," said the girl at the desk; "of course they'll all give you lessons in any of those branches, but our system grounds you thoroughly in all of it, and then you can go on and specialize afterwards if you want to. Then there're those other places where they advertise they'll teach you anything for fifty cents; I guess you don't want any of *them*. They're fierce — if you'll excuse that slang," said Miss Marx, smiling. She reached for a pad of receipt-blanks with so frank and win-

ning a confidence, that Sandra got out her purse in a state of hypnotic obedience.

"There didn't seem to be anything else to do," she wrote home. "I didn't feel as if I could take the time to go running all over New York, looking up the other places, particularly as I was sure there wouldn't be a very great difference. After Miss Marx had got me 'signed up' — *if you'll excuse that slang!* — I asked her when I could begin, and she said right then. Mr. de Voyna's class starts at eleven every morning, so they were just going up. I left my suitcase and things in a dressing-room they have in a crypt down in the basement, and she took me up some more steps behind the desk to a long narrow *salon* done in French grey, with ever so many mirrors between the panels all around and rows of slender little grey chairs along the sides; it's really in very good style, or would be if they'd only keep the floor a little cleaner. At the end towards the street there are the French windows I noticed from the outside, and a raised platform with a piano and one of the large-sized Victorgraphs; and this morning there was a squabby little fat girl, another Jewess by her looks, arranging some music with two other girls loafing around talking to her. They all three hailed Miss Marx very cordially, and never even glanced at me! I suppose they're used to seeing new students coming and going all the time. It turned out that the fat one was the pianist and was just getting ready for the morning class, so Miss Marx handed me over to her, and went back to her desk. The pianist and the two other girls who acted as if they knew all about it went along talking and laughing together, and I trailed after them, through a door in the other end of the *salon*, which I rather expected to open into another *salon* in white and gold perhaps, like the pictures of Parisian interiors

in 'Vogue.' Well, it didn't! All the magnificence stopped off short on the other side of that door. There was a little, dark, smelly sort of a pantry with a tin water-cooler; and we went through that into a lot of long, dark, dirty, tenement-house-y halls and stairways with a light-shaft in the middle, and rags stuffed into broken window-panes, and more rags and dirty papers and rubbish everywhere. One place I looked through one of the inside windows and saw a rough-and-ready kitchen fixed up in a room, and a fat woman washing mountains of dishes. All this while we kept passing troops of weird-looking people, mostly girls going up or down, and when we got higher up, we could hear a piano thumping away, and some man's voice shouting orders, and lots of people singing choruses awfully off the key. The other girls said it was the Sam Lippert show rehearsing; and I could tell by their expression and the way they spoke that they thought the Sam Lippert show and everybody connected with it simply too low-down for words!

"At last we came to a loft at the top of the building, and there were the class and Mr. de Voyna himself. This place has whitewashed walls with posts here and there to hold the roof up; there is some kind of brown burlap stretched tight like a carpet on the part of the floor where we dance, and hand-holds fixed to the posts and walls, for the ballet-dancers to steady themselves by, and if you'll believe me, more mirrors! Only these are just pieces of looking-glass, some of them broken into all kinds of shapes, and there are no frames.

"Mr. de Voyna, who is said in the prospectus to have been a member of the Russian Imperial Ballet at Warsaw, and a dancing-partner of Julie Sedova, is a little bald, and getting stout and wears eyeglasses! He has a very nice face, though; you would take him for a doctor. He

wears knee-breeches, and carries a little wand that he uses in directing us. There are about a dozen in the class; the two girls that came with me, a tall Irish-looking girl that looks exactly like some dining-room maid we have had, two little snub-nosed ones, a very pretty one with black hair, one woman of sixty! — she looks it anyhow — and another about thirty-five. They had on all kinds of clothes, middies and bloomers, bathing-suits, everything you can think of, except the two old ones who were in cheesecloth draperies *à la* Isadora Duncan! This is my class; I was going to say you must fix them in your mind, but somehow I can't fix them in my own. I don't know any of their names, of course, as yet, but that's of no importance. I can't imagine meeting them anywhere else or knowing them outside the school. They're all just as respectable as they can be, they dress nicely on the street, and I'm sure they have good table-manners; but it's the strangest thing, I can't picture to myself who they are and where they come from. They aren't in the least like shopgirls or trained nurses or stenographers; they're very much above cooks and hairdressers and dressmakers; I think they must be the people that the Ladies' Domestic Monthly is published for.

"Mr. de Voyna doesn't bother about names either. He calls us, 'Miss Tennessee,' 'Miss Albany,' and so on, speaking English very well, with only a slight accent. He just put us through the ordinary exercises; and once while we were resting, he actually strolled over to me and said, 'You are Mees—?' I said, 'I'm Miss Ohio.' 'So? You have danced before, Mees Ohio?' I said 'Yes,' and that ended the conversation. He strolled off again, and did a little practising by himself, pirouetting in front of one of the slabs of looking-glass, and I must say he pirouetted beautifully, eyeglasses and bald spot and all. This

is the first (and so far the *last*) notice anybody has taken of me, and it didn't amount to an ovation, as you see. However, I've begun to realize that a rhinoceros might go waltzing up Fifth Avenue on its hind legs, and nobody would turn around to look at it twice; so you needn't wonder that I was so perfectly *paralyzed* at Mr. de Voyna's *seeing* me, let alone speaking to me, that I had to write to you about it.

". . . After the hour with Mr. de Voyna was up, we went down to the crypt and changed our clothes. That is, the others did. I had to dance in my shirt-waist and skirt, as I hadn't brought anything else, except ballet-slippers; and let me tell you it's some stunt to do a *grande échappe* where your legs are as far apart as they can go, with a tight tailor-suit skirt on! Oh, I forgot! *Excuse that slang!* We don't use slang at all in the Claude School, or if we do, we apologize profoundly. Everybody is just as careful and correct as can be . . . The next thing we went up to the grey *salon* to Mrs. Palmer's class. She is on the Goddess of Liberty style as to figure and weight, but with a rather babyish, pretty little face. Some more people now turned up, a sort of youngish-middle-aged woman in a changeable blue taffeta one-piece dress and soiled white boots, one or two mothers who didn't take the lesson, but sat at the sides and looked on, as they might have done in any dancing-school, and *two men*. One of them was young and ordinarily nice-looking; he was just like all the rest of them, I don't know where he belongs, I can't place him. But I judged from his reckless courage in coming to a class of women, and from the fact that he seemed to know most of them, that he might be some person in the 'perfesh' — a teacher, perhaps, from out of town, brushing up, or learning the latest steps. The other man wasn't a dancer, whatever he was — too old and heavy-

set, with a shoe-brush moustache. He didn't seem to be anybody's father, either; I don't know who he was. I don't know whether I'll ever find out who *anybody* is! He didn't talk to any one except to Mrs. Palmer, just sat and fingered his shoe-brush.

"'Class on the floor, please!' said Mrs. Palmer, so we all stood up in a row, and she stood by herself on the other side of the room, facing us, and the pianist (her name is Stella Lipmann) began a little, trilling, piping tune, and I thought: 'Well, here goes! But what sort of waltz or fox-trot can they be going to dance to *that*?' *Justement*, as Mademoiselle used to say, we didn't dance to it! Mrs. Palmer began to recite, with gestures and poses, and we all gestured and posed after her.

"'I am Syrinx, soul of the reed,
In me the rhythm of Life is freed.
The immortal Mu-u-u-sic all men know
Lurks at my lip, but a god must blow.'"

"There's a lot more; I copied it out of another girl's book; we're expected to memorize it, you know. However, one verse will be enough for you; one verse is one too many for anybody, *I* think. Mrs. Palmer elocutes grandly, bearing down hard on all the big, important words and sort of whispering the rest, and rounding her eyes, and waving her big white arms, while the accompaniment — which is really very pretty and musical — tee-diddles along. 'I am Syrinx, soul of the reed!' says Mrs. P. reaching up above her head and *soul*. 'Now *push*, girls, push *up* with your hand like this!' And we all *pushed* with might and main. I thought it wasn't a bad idea to push your soul up; maybe it needs it. But when she came to 'Lurks at my lip,' she made a gesture for all the world like taking pins out of her mouth; just as if nobody would know where

or what a *lip* was if she didn't point it out! We all copied her religiously, the whole roomful taking pins out of their mouths . . .

"The blue-taffeta woman dropped out early in the proceedings with a very *snippy* expression. She sat down with the other women, and I heard her saying to her nearest neighbour that this was all nonsense.

"'Oh, my, I think it's just beautiful!' said the other woman. She is the mother of one of the snub-nosed girls, and anything that child does is beautiful to her, you can see that. I thought it was very sweet to see her eyes follow little Miss Snub-nose around the room.

"'Well, you try it on a lot of society women, and see 'em laugh at you!' said Blue-taffeta. 'They don't want to interpret poetry, they want to *dance*. What's a dancing-school for anyhow? I've got one down in Waco, Texas, and I don't come all the way to New York to fool away my time on this stuff. If it wasn't for Mrs. Palmer reciting, you'd think they were all hanging out the wash. Interpretative, huh!'

. . . "The shoe-brush man made one solitary remark. It was when Mrs. Palmer came to a line like this:

"'For ever the dry cicada sings,
And the sultry locust flaps its wings.'

He said: 'Locusts don't make that gritty sound with their wings. They make it with their hind-legs.'

. . . "It seems this is Mrs. Elaine Perry's work. I feel about it a good deal as Blue-taffeta does. However, if it all comes in the course, I suppose I might as well go on with it. Finally we got to the ball-room dancing, and Mrs. Palmer really did teach us something. I mean new figures and combinations of steps, you know; she *can* dance, if she does weigh a hundred and sixty . . . I danced

most of the time with the young man, and he thanked me very carefully after we got through. Everybody is painfully polite . . . As I went out, I saw another man sitting at a desk in one of the basement rooms, looking awfully busy and important, talking to Mrs. Palmer. Who do you suppose *he* is? Mr. Palmer? . . .

“I told you wrong; somebody else beside Mr. de Voyna saw me. It was Shoe-brush Moustache, Esquire. He was standing on the corner of the Avenue waiting for the ’bus, I think, when I passed. He looked at me very hard, but not impudently, and started to take off his hat, and hesitated, and started again, so I bowed to save him any more embarrassment — for he was quite red in the face by that time, and in a dreadful confusion — and he got the hat all the way off at last, and seemed relieved . . .”

CHAPTER II

BY the end of a month or so, Sandra had settled down to the new life, albeit feeling herself "very much outside of it all," as she privately described her situation. She knew more names among her fellow-boarders and fellow-pupils, but without really knowing their owners; and she had ceased to be disconcerted by the indifference with which they accepted her, name and all. Even Miss Thatcher, from whom at least some show of interest might have been expected, remained pleasantly aloof; her impersonal kindness gave the same impression as the impersonal disregard of the others, namely, that life was already too crowded and too occupied to allow of any enlargement. Sandra divined that she was lost among countless circles of people whose friends, affairs, opinions, likes and dislikes were all definitely arranged, so that they had no desire or incentive to break through or expand; every circle and every single soul in it, she fancied complete and isolated as an electric-light bulb, and as incandescent. She was "on the outside," not because of their ill-will, for they had no more feeling against than for her; they did not, in fact could not, think about her at all. Even among the old-time acquaintances whom from time to time she was driven to hunt up, the girl sensed the same atmosphere, though they one and all painstakingly did their social duty, "showing her some attention" — Sandra knew full well the very phrase in which they would refer to these efforts. She was wise enough in the ways of her own world; and, remembering the treatment she herself had accorded "outsiders" back there at home in days which

were already beginning to seem distant, the ironic aspect of her present position did not escape her. "How we used to laugh at them!" she thought; "how we used to call them *climbers*, and talk about their trying to *get in* and all that! How bored Mother is often when she has to go and call on strangers, and "show them some attention!" All the while the poor things are horribly lonesome. It doesn't make any difference how nice they are; we don't care to find out; we deliberately don't want to bother knowing them. Now I know how they feel. I never thought about it before; it seems inhuman. But you can't blame people; one can't know everybody," Alexandra would wind up, sagely, returning to the shibboleth of her class. "And anyhow I'm not here to do society. I'm here to work."

This work, meanwhile, progressed on the whole satisfactorily; that is to say, Sandra was conscious that if she was not being singled out for notice, she was nevertheless, not being overlooked. In fact, in gymnasium costume, her black locks bound up in a cardinal ribbon, under which her face always of a clear pallor with irregular mobile features and darting black eyes, appeared disturbingly brilliant, Sandra, poising, leaping, alighting, balancing to the music with an arrowy grace and directness, was not a figure to pass unremarked. She had the distinction not merely of doing the thing well, but of doing it with an ineffable air of ease, authority, spontaneity, a delicate abandon, a careless yet unerring taste. That she displayed in the performance of routine ballet-exercises (*grandes échappes*, for instance!) and ball-room steps that rare endowment of intelligence and romantic feeling which people call the artistic temperament, is a statement which Sandra herself would have received with laughter; yet without doubt it was that very quality which set her so apart from

the others that they themselves perceived it. From casual notice of the facts that she never seemed to get out of breath, never changed colour, "picked up" a step at a single demonstration and never forgot it thereafter, and could stand on one foot, and hold by the ankle the other leg extended level with her hip at the first trial with no apparent effort, they progressed to an inquisitive wonder, tinted with suspicion.

"You've been on the stage?" the pretty, dark girl asked, or rather asserted one day. "I know I've seen you before."

Sandra acknowledged that she had danced publicly at home—"for charities, and things like that, you know."

"Well, it couldn't have been there that I saw you. I've never been there," said the other girl, eyeing her unconvinced; "but I *know* I have. You're *sure* you haven't been on the stage? Maybe it was some place else then—at the Cataracts, or the Crystal Room, or somewhere. Oh, I remember! You used to be Thorley's dancing partner, weren't you?" She would not believe Sandra's smiling denial. "Mr. de Voyna said you must have been on the stage," she insisted.

"Did he?" said Sandra, taken by surprise. De Voyna had scarcely spoken to her since the first lesson; certainly he had looked at her, had watched her indeed very sharply and steadily now and then, but she supposed he passed them all in review after the same fashion, and would not have been embarrassed by it in any event. In spite of the artistic conscience that never let her rest, that urged her unremittingly to a finer endeavour, Sandra was capable of saying to herself coolly that de Voyna would find no one in the class who was doing better than herself, no one who was doing half so well, no one who could touch her! Let him watch!

This same day, as they were practising, there presented themselves at the studio — such, it developed, was the technical title for Mr. de Voyna's loft — two young girls and a young man, who, after some low-voiced conference with the ballet-master, went and sat down in a corner, obviously waiting till the lesson should be over. This sort of audience was no new thing to Mr. de Voyna's assemblage of coryphées; relatives or acquaintances of their own, stray members of the Sam Lippert company (which still kept up an energetic rehearsing overhead) prospective students with *their* relatives and acquaintances, detached individuals on no specific errand apparently, like the man with the shoe-brush moustache, were for ever loitering in, staying a while, loitering out again. The classes worked on, oblivious; the visitors themselves, for that matter, never seemed to be particularly interested. In the antique phrase, they cared for nobody, no, not they, and nobody cared for them! To Sandra, it was only another manifestation of the metropolitan habit and usage which she herself was rapidly acquiring. But today, during the ten minutes' rest, one of the girls whispered around the information that this trio wanted to dance for de Voyna.

"At least, one of them is going to," she amended. "I think it's that youngest girl — the one with the white Angora fuzzy stuff on her coat. The other two brought her; they want to get her in the grand-opera ballet. I couldn't hear all they said — a person doesn't want to hang around and listen, you know — but I *think* that's what they were talking about."

Sandra heard her alertly. She herself had not thought of asking for an audience with de Voyna, having her mind fixed on the Claude couple, Monsieur and Madame, who were still in Europe. As time went on, and the

gossip of the school bubbled about her, Sandra gradually received further enlightenment about these famous and wonderful artists. It transpired that they lent the school their name, precisely as they lent their name to a number of other worthy enterprises, with which they had no actual connection, Claude hats, Claude corsets, Claude pumps — lent being, Sandra was told, a euphemism for sold. Never were people more widely, more skilfully, or more profitably advertised. Nor, when all is said, was anybody wronged by this piece of amiable obliquity; the Claude pumps and corsets were very likely good pumps and corsets, even as the Claude dancing-school was a good dancing-school; it did everything that it professed to do, Sandra thought reasonably. There was a good deal of sharp comment among her fellow-students as to an alleged lack of appreciation suffered by Mrs. Palmer. Why wasn't it called the Palmer School, they demanded; she was the mainstay of the place; just let her take another position and people would *see* how much the Claude name amounted to; all the Claudes did was to take down the money — excuse that slang! They prophesied freely that it couldn't go on long this way; the Claudes had passed the height of their popularity; they hadn't introduced anything new lately; and so forth and so on. They were quite fiercely partisan, all knowing one another well, and speaking freely before and to Sandra, who must necessarily keep silence, not being so conversant with these facts as the rest. It abated her feeling of loneliness, however, to be thus accepted by any circle amongst this vast agglomeration of circles; she would not have thought so a few weeks earlier, but possibly Sandra's feelings and points of view were undergoing some subtle alteration. Sundry ideas had insinuated themselves to her, which would have caused preceding generations of Boardmans to turn over, scandal-

ized, in their graves — if all theories about the departed be correct. For instance, the young woman not only thought about money but would discuss it openly; and, in considering Mrs. Palmer's case, Sandra would say to herself with a shrewdness and a business-instinct appalling to discover in a gentleman's daughter, that the Syrinx — which was her profane nickname for Mrs. Palmer — was not wasting away under carking cares; on the contrary she had a pretty good thing! And there might be worse ways of making a living than being at the head of a school which charged twenty-five dollars for the first week and fifteen weekly thereafter, to say nothing of the altitudinous private lessons and special courses, even if one had to divide up with a set of Claudes. Numbers of eminent artists ended their careers by teaching; as well begin that way. At any rate, it was always a recourse. She was of the same mind with that other philosophical adventurer amongst the arts who pointed out that when poetry fails there is always the wash-tub.

Here, however, was a new idea. There might be no Claudes to dance for, but there was de Voyna, who was just as good a critic, and whose word — since they brought grand-opera aspirants to him — must be of just as much weight. Sandra scanned the other girl appraisingly. She was eighteen or so, not particularly good- or ill-looking, not particularly well or badly dressed, ordinarily rouged and powdered, with a face just now entirely expressionless. Her companions matched her. Sandra found herself as usual unable to classify these people; she could not guess who they were, whence they came, and what their homes and friends were like or what their normal occupations. New York City swarmed with them; she herself might be taken for one of them by people who didn't know, she thought; and, with a slight start,

remembered that nobody did know. To all intents and purposes she *was* one of them.

"Let's stay and see her dance," suggested the Irish-looking girl whose name, Sandra had recently discovered was not Ryan or Conroy as might have been expected, but Schwab! So the class withdrew to its accustomed roosts on the window-sills and the few rickety chairs of the studio, the unknown tucked up her skirt which was already sufficiently short, and rather too narrow in accordance with that season's fashion, removed her walking-shoes and tied on a pair of ballet-slippers with the help of her friends, and Miss Lipmann began the ballet-music from "Sylvia."

It was, Sandra coldly decided, just the performance to be looked for; not particularly good, not particularly bad, like the dancer's own appearance; of no character at all. "She hasn't an idea in her head about it," thought this ruthless young critic contemptuously. "She can move in time to the music, but she doesn't *feel* it, any more than those dolls they fasten to the Victorgraph discs. She smiles and shows her teeth, because she's been told to — and it's never once occurred to her that you can show other feelings in other ways. You don't have to smile all the time. It's stupid. Dancing isn't just steps and motions; she ought to *know* that. She's studied hard, but she hasn't seen into it somehow. If you can't be original, you can at least pick out the right person to imitate, but this poor thing hasn't even done that. I should think Mr. de Voyna would tell her, or give her some advice about it — stir her up some way. Mediocrity oughtn't to be encouraged."

Whatever Mr. de Voyna thought, however, he kept to himself. His handsome, regular features of a slightly Calmuck cast were gravely immobile while the dancer

twirled, rose and sank, mechanically smiling, before him. "Very nice, very nice," he said at the end; and the three surrounded him again with murmured conversation. The class filed off to the next lesson, equally sparing of comment; either they were uninterested, or were bent on preserving the metropolitan pose of a lack of interest, or, like Sandra herself, kept their opinions private out of common prudence and humanity. It may be, though, that Miss Boardman was not so successful in this well-meant effort as she believed; she could not emulate de Voyna's masterly impassivity. For when, later on, she applied to him for an audience, fortified by the argument that if he could stand any one so thoroughly unendowed and uninspired as the other girl, he could certainly stand *her*, the Russian looked her over sharply with a little, disconcerting smile of comprehension and good-humoured malice.

"Ah, ah, we can dance much better, oh but much better than the mees the other day, *hein?*" said he. "We think that she was all that there is of the most banal, is it not? *Ouf*, that smile! It is to make one want to bite, eh?" And here Mr. de Voyna with a shrug, trailed off into a sibilant French phrase or two, while Sandra, who did not understand the language, stood before him embarrassed but confident. He checked himself abruptly. "So *you* want to dance for me? *A la bonne heure!* I imagined to myself that that would be next," he said, eyeing her. "Where have you danced?"

Sandra felt sure that he had not asked the other girl any such question. She told him, and was not ill-pleased to see him receive the information with a face of polite disbelief, though he did not press the inquiry.

"For charity? So? As you choose, mees. What do you wish to dance for me?"

"There's some music called the *Oreadentanz* — Dance of the Oreads, that is —" Sandra began.

"*Asses!* I speak nine languages, Mees Ohio, and I know all the dance music — but all of it!" said Mr. de Voyna. "You want to dance the *Oreadentanz* of your compatriot, Mr. McDowell. Very good. And what then? Can you do anything else?"

"*Anything else?*" repeated Sandra in a blaze of temper so fierce and sudden as to astonish herself — in retrospect. "Anything you choose. I will improvise if you like. I will dance to music I never heard before. I can do anything!" She stopped, aghast, yet angry still. She found de Voyna insufferable with his Olympian airs; he did not know with whom he had to deal; she was no simpering automaton; she was a dancer; she —

"Oh, la, la, la, now it is you who will bite!" observed the ballet-master so amiably that instant mortification engulfed the girl. She was almost frightened to hear him echo aloud her very thought. "You are a dancer, eh? It is not for an old *un-deux-trois-attention-mesdames* like me to command you, an artist. *C'est bien çà!* I, also —" Mr. de Voyna broke off with another shrug, a smile, a sigh of infinite patience and melancholy resignation which Sandra was far too occupied with herself to understand, even to perceive. "*Va pour l'Oreadentanz alors!* And for whatever besides suits you — *que diable!* You shall stay and dance for me tomorrow after the lesson. *On pourra bien se passer de cette sale Syrinx, hein?*" said de Voyna, expressing himself with a certain liberty, perhaps because he knew it to be quite safe!

The audience would not have been highly satisfactory to most candidates; and whoever awaits the news that this heroine, after stirring de Voyna to a hurricane enthusiasm, sprang at once into prominence, the limelight,

and a salary of staggering magnitude at some Broadway theatre — whoever looks for statements like these, I say, had better close the book. Something of the kind undoubtedly did arrive in the course of time, but not at this point. But Sandra herself was somehow not disappointed, though de Voyna, so far from commending her performance, did not even reward it with his “Very nice” — a formula which, for that matter, the girl did not want to hear. The ex-ballet-dancer watched her for an hour; once or twice he uttered a “*Tiens!*” and she thought he swore in Russian under his breath repeatedly — in Russian or in some other of his nine languages. At the last, he stopped her roughly in the middle of a tarantelle which she thought she was dancing with great spirit, pushed her to one side, shouted at the pianist to go on, and danced a dozen measures himself, mimicking her brutally. “A tarantelle is not what you call a cake-walk, Mees Ohio. It is not a clog-dance. You dance like a nigger! Like this — and this — Bah!” He made a gesture of disgust complete and convincing. “Listen to me! You have been bitten by the spider whose bite is death — you who are young, beautiful, desired — you who love! It is the end. And you dance, you who know it is the end! You dance with agony in your heart, with passion, with despair — you dance! You would give your soul to weep, to pray, to cry one last word of love and farewell — and you must dance!” De Voyna wrung his hands, he clutched his temples, he moved his eyes wildly. “*Mon Dieu*, feel a little of all that! Dance it, dance it!” he screeched.

Miss Lipmann at the piano, stared; to her he was a middle-aged and hitherto respectable foreign gentleman suddenly gone off his head, stamping and raving. But Sandra whose initial feeling had been furious resentment, now forgot everything in the illumination he let in upon

her. "Play!" she cried out, in her turn sharply. "Begin, why don't you? Play!"

"And believe *me*, I played!" avowed the pianist, in recounting the experience afterwards. "I played for all I was worth. I didn't want those two nuts to get any nuttier if my playing could stop it!"

"Well, how did it come out? Did she do it to suit him the second time?" was asked.

"I don't know. I guess so," said Miss Lipmann indifferently. "They neither of 'em said much. She has to die at the end, you know, and I thought she did that part beautifully. So many of 'em can't fall down well; she went down light as a feather; you couldn't hear a sound, and yet it was just as if she'd been struck by lightning. She certainly did that part awfully well. He went and helped her up — *that's* something I never saw him do for anybody else —" interpolated Miss Lipmann thoughtfully; "and then they just kind of looked at each other for a minute. And that ended it. I wasn't just what you'd call sorry. It's work playing for people to dance." Thus did Miss Lipmann view the very first rendition of a dance that for poetry and fire became one of the most celebrated in Sandra's repertory. One might suppose the little Jewess would have made some capital out of the fact, but she was a simple soul and probably never thought of such a thing, lurid as the episode was, not even when the Sunday supplements began to be busy with Sandra's features, costumes, poses, and biography. "Well, what do you know about that? I've played for her dozens of times! When she was going to Claude's, that last year before the school broke up. What d'ye know about that?" she would remark unemotionally.

But this was not until some while later. Sandra went on with her technical exercises in the attic studio and the

first-floor salon of the Claude establishment, and everything was as before except in the solitary respect that de Voyna now accorded her several hours a week privately. It was his own proposal, and Sandra met it at first with a bluntness of speech that showed how much she must have already fallen away from original standards.

"Mr. de Voyna, I haven't the money. You're ever so kind, but I can't afford it."

"That is my affair," said the Russian.

That was the only arrangement made, and Sandra's family knew nothing about it. Why should she tell them, the girl argued. They would not understand. They would be ridiculously shocked, to begin with, at the notion of her going to him without any chaperon! And they would think it did not "look well" for him to be giving her lessons for nothing. Not to "look well" connoted with them a number of things about which they were for ever coaching and warning Sandra in language carefully veiled, but none the less emphatic. Alas, the young woman was not in the least grateful, nor did she take their words to heart; she would laugh, or throw the letters with all their affectionate anxiety into the waste-basket. She was sick and tired, Sandra said to herself, of this solemn twaddle about untrustworthy men, and the dangers a girl ran; the novels were full of it, the women's magazines fairly dripped with it. It was all the veriest stuff. No girl who behaved herself, and kept her mind on her work had anything to fear. Perhaps there was some solid foundation for these theories; for it is a fact that Sandra went undamaged throughout her career both as a student and artist. She never encountered any of those wolves in masculine garb, or those harpy-like ladies about whom all of us have heard so authoritatively; either they avoided her instinctively, or with her steady young vision

fixed on the heights, with "her mind on her work," as she said, she never was aware of them and their tawdry temptations.

There were, indeed, other matters which Sandra kept from her people. Mrs. Richard had no inkling of the girl's moments of loneliness and low spirits and of her impulses to go home to the easy, aimless life. Sandra's letters were always gay, sanguine, sensible; she made a little comedy out of her experiences as a working-girl. . . . "I have been taking taxis right and left whenever I felt tired, or it was raining, and have been going to places for luncheon where I would have to pay at least sixty cents for a sandwich and bouillon and a chocolate éclair. Just the other day I suddenly thought: 'Here, this won't do! I'm poor! I live in a hall-bedroom. I ought to work up some local colour.' So since then I've tried a whole lot of cafeterias and places like Child's, and it's really a good deal of fun, and perfectly surprising how much you can get for a quarter. . . Mrs. Tower came into my room and sat for an hour, and told me all about ever so many love-affairs she had had, and what a time Mr. Tower had getting her, and how there was another girl after *him*. Then when he died (she didn't seem to feel very badly over it) she started this boarding-house; and she told me what a perfectly wonderful success it was, on account of her system of *never being intimate with the boarders, or telling them anything about her affairs!* She 'raised' her niece, whose father and mother are both dead . . . I think Miss Schultze, by the way, is really a very nice girl, not a bit like the aunt; but I haven't had much to do with her, of course. . . ."

"Mercy, I hope *not!*" ejaculates Mrs. Richard. "They must be dreadfully ordinary people —"

"Harmless, though, and rather amusing, it seems to me," says Mrs. Alexander mildly.

"Well, I don't know about their being so harmless, Mother. That sort of person is very liable to *fasten* on a girl like Sandra, one who they can see has had greater advantages socially, you know — and — er — all that. They think so much of things like that. They're likely to be very pushing and disagreeable," said the wise Mrs. Richard. "Listen to this: "'She' — that's this Schultze girl, you know — 'came and offered to hook me up the other night, when I was going to Mildred Stacey's — Mildred Barnes', that is — and I was glad she did, for it was my black-and-silver, and I couldn't have got into it by myself —' So now, of course, she will expect Sandra to reciprocate by hooking *her*, and then she will begin calling her by her first name, and all that," said Sandra's mother. "That's the way those people always do. I'll have to write to Sandra. She's never been thrown with that class before, and I can see she doesn't quite know how to keep them at a distance. One can do it without being unkind —"

She went on reading: "'Last Saturday night she and Mr. Beckley wanted me to go with them and another man — some friend who is in the same office as Mr. Beckley — to a moving-picture theatre, and then to supper somewhere afterwards' — *There, I told you how it would be!* 'but I declined' — *Thank goodness! But I might have known Sandra would be careful* — 'as nicely as I could' *Of course. You don't want to hurt their feelings* — 'I told them I had already been out late two nights this week, and that was my limit. It was the truth, too. You must be in perfect physical condition if you want to do your best, and that means denying yourself a good deal'

— *How seriously the child takes it, doesn't she? You'd think she had to make her living* — 'I danced for them the other night at Mildred's. Nobody could play, but they had a Victorgraph. Everybody seemed to like it, at least they applauded. . . .

"What do you think? I've lately had two offers. I don't mean *offers*, so don't get excited. One of the men that I dance with a good deal at the school told me he knew of an "opening" at an "exclusive tea-room" (it was the Astorbilt, which is really nice, you know) and if I would "go in with him" he was sure we would "make a hit." He meant exhibition-dancing, you know. Now please don't imagine there was anything sentimental about this. He wasn't thinking of a thing in the world but business. He dances beautifully himself, and of course he knows it, but he isn't at all silly about it. He *has* to dance beautifully; it's his bread and butter! He said: "This is a very high-class proposition, Miss Boardman, or I wouldn't consider it a minute either for you or myself. You wouldn't be brought into any unpleasant association whatever. When the management came to me, I made them understand distinctly that the young lady I hoped to get for dancing-partner was not to be obliged to mingle with the guests. They said that was just exactly what they were anxious to get; they mean to make a point of our keeping strictly to ourselves." . . .

"The other "proposition," which was just as business-like, came through the Syrinx. Some man, the manager of some big hotel down in Aiken or San Antonio, or maybe it was at Palm Beach, one of those Southern winter resorts anyhow, wanted somebody like me to be a kind of resident professional entertainer for the people — be around whenever any one wanted to dance or play tennis or make up a bridge-table, and things like that.

Don't you remember, Mother, seeing girls like that, or sometimes some man, at those places? I always thought it was such a queer thing to do; but it's a regular *job* like anything else! Mrs. Palmer never cracked a smile when she told me; *she* didn't see anything queer about it. She said that the school ordinarily did not undertake to supply people for positions, but that this was an exceptional case. They wanted somebody who would "fit in with the tone of the place which is exceedingly exclusive and refined" so she *at once* thought of me! Wasn't that a bouquet, though? You get all your expenses coming and going and while you're there. "Of course you can put all the clothes you want in the laundry. They *expect* that," the Syrinx said. "But I don't need to tell a girl like you anything about that or the proper style of dress. You *know*. . . ."

"Mr. Thatcher is here. He crossed on the *Altruria*, and says it was terribly rough all the way. Only think, he's just been in St. Petersburg, and now he has to go to Buenos Aires! . . ."

Sandra's mother sighed gently as she folded up the letter. "He has a very interesting life, going everywhere and seeing everything. Sandra likes travelling, too, and doing rather out-of-the-way things — like this dancing-school fad, for instance. They're unusually congenial," she remarked, and sighed again.

"She doesn't say anything about having declined those two 'positions' as she calls them," said the older Mrs. Boardman.

"Eh? Why, no. I suppose she thought she didn't need to tell us *that*. Fancy Sandra doing anything of that kind!"

CHAPTER III

MARY SCHULTZE, in spite of a metropolitan bringing up, her office-girl position and that aggressive looking nose which Sandra has remarked upon, was a rather shy and quiet girl. She was aware that in sum total her slight figure, soft, smooth, straight, light-coloured hair, and gentle blue eyes lacked effect; aware, too, that this lack was not to be supplied or overcome. Sick or well, young, old, dressed like a princess or going in rags, she still would have been a very cipher for unimpressiveness; neither good nor ill fortune nor any sort of honours or achievements could have invested her with the indefinable quality which she called "personality." It is, however, no uncommon lot to feel oneself a nonentity in New York, so Mary, being a sensible enough girl, did not bemoan the fact; it only stirred in her a fervent admiration untainted by envy or jealousy for anybody like Alexandra Boardman. This slender and elegant creature with her fine unconscious distinction that was so superior to physical perfection, that had nothing to do with dress or surroundings, set up a new standard for Miss Schultze. It remained unshaken even by the graciously administered rebuffs which her first timid advances met. Somehow or other, Mary found it natural and appropriate that so eminently endowed a being should be courteously inaccessible; warmth or informality of manner would not have become her.

"It isn't that she's got so much *style*," she declared to Mr. Beckley. "She's awfully aristocratic, through and through."

"Huh! Studying to be an actress, isn't she?"

"No. It's aesthetic dancing."

"Well, great goodness. I don't see anything so aristocratic about *that!*" said Gus.

"I don't think she has to. I think she's just doing it to be doing something. It's that kind of *extreme* thing society girls do, you know —"

"Yeah. Like one of these millionaires giving a dinner for a pet bull-dog, or some stunt on that order," the young man acquiesced.

"Oh, no, that's just sort of crazy and silly. This is more like taking a course in kindergarten or library-work. It's kind of like playing that they have to work. It isn't much like the real thing, but they don't know that," Mary said, not without a certain odd condescension. "I expect Miss Boardman can stop whenever she wants to."

"She couldn't stop too soon for me!" said Augustus rather grimly. "Dancing! I don't believe her folks can be such a much, or they wouldn't let her do it. Maybe it's because they live out West — in Ohio or wherever it is — and don't know anything. If they'd ever seen what goes on at these cabaret places —"

"Oh, my, she isn't thinking of going anywhere like that!" Mary protested, shocked. "She's going to be one of the — the high-up ones —"

"She is, is she?" said Gus with sarcastic significance. He opined that she was due to learn a good deal before she was through with it — if she stuck, that is. And Mary's blue eyes, clouding a little, gave tacit assent. The two looked not unlike as they sat together on the sofa in the boarding-house parlour; in the lines already mapping their young faces one might read a similar experience of life, not exactly hard, only changeless and devoid of illusions. Both of them had always had good

enough homes, good enough health, good enough luck generally. There were no drunkards or wastrels or invalids on either side, no tragic burdens. Mary could not remember her father and mother and got on comfortably with Mrs. Tower, who was kind to the girl; she did not resent the necessity for work, but spent or saved her ten dollars a week with satisfaction, and did a little embroidery for her wedding-outfit, and good-naturedly withstood the "joshing" of her companion office-girls, and waited patiently for Gus, and was not unhappy or out of temper over the flavourless dish fate had spread for her. Young Beckley had to support his mother; he got seventy dollars a month at McChesney's, with no prospect of getting any more soon, if ever. But he did not look upon these circumstances as hardships; everybody has to start in a small way; he was doing as well as any one could reasonably expect, and some day would do a great deal better. There are thousands upon thousands of just such couples all over the country — all over the universe! — and like Gus and Mary, if they sometimes glimpse for a moment the monotony of their existence, they are saved by the belief, in nine cases out of ten never to be realized, that it is not always going to be so.

"I wouldn't take twenty of that Miss Boardman for one of you, anyhow," said Augustus loyally. "There's nothing to those society girls." He reached out for her hand and squeezed it. "Say, Mary, when we get married —"

"Oh, Gus, don't! Somebody'll see you —!"

About this time Mr. Thatcher landed from the *Altruria*; and coming around to see Sandra he ere long made the acquaintance of the other young people. That is to say, Samuel, who was no stickler for formalities, beginning by off-hand conversation with young Beckley, was presently

with scarcely an introduction on friendly terms with Miss Schultze. The latter swiftly divined the situation between him and Miss Boardman — divined it with compassion.

"I shouldn't wonder if he'd been after her for ever so long," she communicated to Gus; "and of course she won't have him. I feel so sorry for him."

"'Of course'?" echoed Mr. Beckley. "Why 'of course'? He's — why, he's a prince! He must make a lot. He probably gets a big salary and commissions on the side. He's all right. What's the matter with her?"

"Oh, he isn't the kind that would ever appeal to her, Gus. He might just as well give it up. I do feel so sorry for him. If you were a girl, you'd understand."

Miss Thatcher, having been a girl, no doubt did understand. She accepted Sam's presents and dutiful fraternal attentions good-humouredly, went about with him as much as she thought advisable, and then diplomatically withdrew without betraying any annoying sisterly jealousy, without feeling any, in fact, for Kate was very nearly as cool-hearted as she was cool-headed and had long been used to "paddling her own canoe" as she herself said sometimes adding with a laugh that she never allowed anybody to rock it, either. Notwithstanding her professed detachment, however, she did give Samuel a word of warning in regard to one project he broached.

"I don't think I'd do that if I were in your place, Sam. You can't go mixing Miss Boardman up with those people."

"Oh, pshaw, she likes them. She told me Miss Schultze was a nice girl. She doesn't seem to know Beckley very well, but they've been right here in the house with her for months —"

"Yes, and she's never had anything to do with them!" interrupted her sister. Then all at once she began to

laugh. "Oh, well, go ahead! You'll have to find out for yourself."

But Sam, as it happened, did not find out. "Let's go to the Hippodrome some night before I sail. And I'll tell you what I'd like to do. I'd like to take Beckley and his girl, your little stenographer friend. They don't have much fun. I judge he doesn't make a great deal, and he can't spend any of it. I'd like to give 'em a good time," he said to Sandra, never doubting her response. And to be sure, Sandra, after one blank instant, spoke with sufficient cordiality.

"Oh, you feel as if you ought to show them some attention. Why yes, of course. I think that would be a very nice thing to do."

So they went, and to Sandra's inward surprise, it turned out to be no such ordeal after all. Mr. Beckley and Miss Schultze were properly dressed, and there was nothing "common" about their conduct; Sam's entertainment was not too lavish; everything went off so well that Miss Boardman ended by having a very good time herself! They did not see any one she knew, or the others knew, whereat Sandra was a little relieved, though she said to herself recklessly that she would not have minded; what difference did it make on this coast of Bohemia? But afterwards she and Mary did call each other by the first name, dreadful to relate; and Mr. Beckley was noticeably easier in his manner; and they even made some sly references to Mr. Thatcher's aspirations! The expedition and its results had to be added to the increasing list of matters that she omitted to mention in her letters home.

Late that winter the Claude School, fulfilling the prophecies and rumours which had been in circulation all season, collapsed. The pupils scattered; Mrs. Palmer

went to another establishment farther up town connected with some fashionable dramatic enterprise, it was understood; de Voyna enlisted a compatriot, "late of the Royal Ballet" at Vienna, St. Petersburg, Stockholm or where you choose, and started a school of his own; Miss Lipmann "got a job" playing in a moving-picture theatre; the Claudes' business representative was to be seen for some days before the close busy over the books with Miss Marx; and Sandra now discovered that that hitherto negligible individual, the shoe-brush-moustached man occupied this position! No wonder he had been "around" so often, she reflected; she had fallen into the habit of nodding to him, moved by his own habit of eyeing her waveringly, with halfway gestures towards his hat in a perennial and visibly harassing uncertainty as to whether she recognized him or not. Flesh and blood could not endure the spectacle; it was like attending the efforts of a stammerer to enunciate clearly; Sandra bowed in self-defence, to settle her own nerves; and on every occasion the shoe-brush moustache finished his salutation with the same air of relief, the girl said, as if he had just escaped from the dentist's chair. But she did not know his name until one morning as she ran up the steps past Miss Marx's desk, the book-keeper stopped her with a gesture.

"Oh, Miss Boardman — why — just a minute, please!" she said; and as Sandra paused and turned with a foot on the next step, Miss Marx, manœuvring into close range, gave her an almost imperceptible grimace of meaning. "Meet Mr. Levison — Mr. Max Levison."

Mr. Max Levison bowed, muttering incoherently under his moustache, and half-extending his hand with the indecision seemingly characteristic of him. Sandra, as usual, put an end to it in sheer humanity, by holding out

her own, which he took and retained for an instant with a fearful care as if it had been of the texture of an egg-shell.

"Miss Boardman's one of our stars," Alma told him.

"Oh, I know that!" said Mr. Levison with a nervous smile. "I saw her when she first came. Let's see, that's been three or four months, hasn't it? I guess she knew something about dancing before she came, but she must have liked us pretty well, or she wouldn't have stayed, hey?" Having got himself started in this rather quaint fashion, speaking of Sandra instead of to her, he was apparently unable to abandon it, but went on addressing the book-keeper with a kind of flurried and involuntary fluency. "It's a pity we've got to close up but she must have noticed how the attendance has been falling off — it's run down steadily ever since she came — Oh, I — I mean — I didn't mean —"

Sandra's laugh was so spontaneous and sincere that Miss Marx, after an embarrassed moment, joined her unrestrainedly. Levison looked at them at first doubtfully, then with a dawning grin.

"Now look here, don't you start kidding me about that break. You know perfectly well what I meant — both of you," said he, and something in the cast of his speech, or in his manner, aroused Sandra to the fact that he was a younger man than she had supposed — perhaps under thirty-five. There was only a streak or two of grey in his strong black hair. "Do you know yet what you're going to do? After the break-up, you know? Made any plans?" he asked of her directly, for the first time.

Sandra told him she was going home for a rest.

"Oh, *home!* Oh, you're going to go home!" echoed Mr. Levison blankly, fingering the shoe-brush. "Where is your home?"

Sandra told him that, too, glancing at the clock, and beginning to move on her way.

"Oh, yes, I've been there. But — why — er — listen!" said Levison urgently. "You're coming back? You're going to keep on? You're not going to give it up?"

"I want to keep on," said Sandra, politely chilly. "So sorry, Mr. Levison, I have to go to my lesson now," and she sped off up the stairs, feeling his gaze follow her.

Miss Marx made an opportunity afterwards to explain that she could not avoid the introduction. "He asked me flat out, and I couldn't help it. He'd been at me before to do it, and I had kind of put him off, you know, because I thought maybe you wouldn't be crazy about it; but this time I couldn't help myself. Besides I feel as if I ought to keep in with him. It's business," she said simply.

"Oh, I — I'm sure Mr. Levison is very nice," said Sandra in some confusion. She could think of no answer that would have been entirely proper and adequate, as she later told the family, describing this incident with laughter.

"Oh, yes, he's got plenty, I expect," said Alma. "He's interested with the Rosenbergs. They're pretty solid people to be in with. They've got a name on Broadway, and every now and then one of their shows makes a big hit, but I don't believe that's where they make the money. No, *sir*, that's where they spend it! It's funny, a Broadway reputation isn't any special good on Broadway, but you can play it to the limit — if you don't mind my using that sporty-sounding expression — all over the rest of the country. It's the Rosenberg Circuit where the money comes from, since all the stars have taken to vaudeville.

They've got Olga Nethersole and Mrs. Campbell and Faversham — oh, I don't know who all! I expect Mr. Levison could tell you all about it, though; he's on the inside. He told me Mr. and Mrs. Claude were going out next season — on the Circuit, you know —" and so on, and so on.

Sandra went home at the Easter holidays according to her plans. Everett met her at the station, looking more debonair than ever; seeing the young fellow's handsome, well-cut head and fine shoulders above the crowd, from the top of her Pullman steps, Sandra felt a throb of pride in him. How splendid he was! How common everybody seemed beside him! How good it felt to be back among one's own people! She even laughed in delighted recognition of the fact that he had picked up a porter, though there was a great crowd and nobody else had one; that was Everett all over! He had never carried a bag in his life; everybody was always ready and eager to wait on him. To be sure he tipped the servants regally, and perhaps they scented that, but anyhow they always admired and applauded and followed him. Everett was glad to see her, too, although of course he would not show much feeling before such an audience; the brother and sister greeted each other decorously, though they chattered like magpies once in the taxi together. So much seemed to have happened in these few months. Ted So-and-So, was engaged to some Buffalo girl — and after the way he had rushed Frances So-and-So, too! Mrs. Henry D. Meigs and the rest of the Meigs family had come back from Europe and opened up that old barracks of a place on the North Hill — it looked like the Arabian Nights now. "They said" that Nellie Maranda — Nellie Loring — was going to get a divorce from that Loring fellow; the wonder was she hadn't done it before. Didn't

the old town look natural, though? It did, the dear, familiar, dirty old town!

At the house, there were the family waiting, and her room all prettily done over with a new wall-paper that had high-handled baskets of flowers tied with streamers of pink and blue ribbon on it; her favourite soup, her favourite dessert were ready; the old gilt-and-white china *épergne* that was all that was left of Mrs. Jacob Boardman's dinner-service, and that always stood on the lacquered table Commodore Chase had brought from the Orient in one of his cruises eighty years ago, was filled with cards of invitation for Miss Boardman. There was to be a Kermess for the benefit of the Orphans' Home in which she had been asked to dance as a matter of course. Everett was in it, too; all the young people were in it.

"You won't know a great many of them. They come from the suburbs and all over everywhere — people you never saw before, and probably will never see again," her mother said. "It's just like all the charity entertainments in that way. But this Miss Somebody that they've gotten to come here and manage the thing, seems to be very careful and judicious. She gets the girls and men that know one another, and are in the same set, together, and that prevents any unpleasantness. You don't have to go outside of your own group."

Sandra did not answer, and Mrs. Richard talked on, not questioning that she had expressed sentiments so natural and reasonable as to need no answer; in fact, Sandra would have found them so, too, once upon a time; she would have entirely concurred with the judgment that pronounced Miss Somebody to be very careful and judicious, and that it avoided unpleasantness to keep to your own group. That was less than six months before; why was it that now her mother's words moved the girl preposterously with a

desire to laugh or cry, she scarcely knew which? She looked around the table, at her father's kind, tired face; at Everett sitting opposite inimitably well-dressed, and well-mannered; at her dainty grey-haired mother; at her grandmother's harsh, high features and beautiful hands; at the simple, charming room, even at the maid in the background, who was a little awkward and flustered, nothing like the finished servant Mrs. Boardman's maids used to be. She was new, and they kept only one, nowadays, it seemed. This, Sandra said to herself, was her group; she loved them, she was proud of them, she understood them to the very core, she was happy to be with them — for two weeks! What was the matter with her, she thought guiltily, that the life they lived should suddenly seem so distasteful? She was actually thinking of her shabby boarding-house, of de Voyna, of the turbulent, indifferent city, of those two "offers" she had temporized about, attracted and repelled, unable definitely to accept or decline — she was actually thinking of these things with restlessness and eagerness! She was ashamed of the feeling, terrified lest the others should guess at it. What would they think of her, this dear, admiring, devoted family? What would her mother think if she knew how much like a sweet child she seemed, with a pretty playhouse, and a "group" of nice, lovable little girl friends, with playhouses! Remorse shook her to the soul; and yet — and yet two weeks would be all she could endure of it.

"Sandra, that's your sauce *remoulade* on the asparagus — you know you're so fond of it — Sandra! Dearie — why, you're not crying!"

"I o-can't help it — I'm — I'm so glad to be here!" Sandra stammered, gallantly untruthful, raging at herself. She choked back the sob, and jumped up, seizing hold of her mother. "I'm going to wool you around!"

The mood persisted in varying degrees all through her stay. Everybody was kind, interested, more or less inquisitive, very complimentary about her dancing. The return of Miss Alexandra Boardman, the parties given for her, her appearance in the Kirmess must have been a perfect boon to the society reporters. Sandra was grateful, or tried to be; after the lonesome winter, she felt she should be more appreciative, should cling to every minute with her family and friends. Alas, the truth was, as she acknowledged inwardly with shame, that she was counting the minutes off with relief! And as to appreciation, the girl knew that she would rather have one half-hour with de Voyna storming, sneering, grudgingly approving by turns, than a year of plaudits from these good and polite people. What did they know about it, she thought with contempt; even if they had been competent critics they would still have carefully sugar-coated their words to her. For that matter, she did not need *them* to tell her she could dance! The sober fact was, that, like every other artistic endeavourer that ever lived, she did need and feel greatly the stimulus of an admiration which intrinsically she found valueless, even despised. Nothing could really satisfy her except the pursuit of her art with struggles, conquests and defeats of which only she herself could ever know.

It will be seen that Miss Boardman, in this brief space, owing to nobody knows what influences, the isolation of New York, the vindication of her belief in her own talents, the contact with another social world, or what-not, had undergone some disturbing change, spiritual or mental or both. She was no longer the anxious, visionary young person who had gone off upon a quixotic impulse to save her father from bankruptcy. If that purpose had still been uppermost in Sandra's mind, she might have been confirmed in it by certain patent small facts, as that the house

and table were not so well supplied as formerly, the wardrobes of the two elder ladies not so liberal, and her father's verging on shabbiness, and by other signs of curtailment of expenses everywhere visible, though kept in the background. But the girl scarcely remarked these things at all. She was of a generous disposition, and still thought by fits and starts of how much she was going to help the family; but she thought much oftener and with incomparably greater intensity of what an artist she was going to be. She was naïvely surprised at the disappointment and trouble that gathered in the others' faces when she spoke of going back to New York.

"We — we thought you'd stay at home for a while now," her mother said at last. "You seemed so glad to get home. We had that room papered — I wanted everything to look pretty and attractive to you —" Her voice shook a little; having that room papered had entailed some scrimping and pinching and "going without."

"It is pretty and attractive, Moms — it's just as sweet as it can be. I *love* it!" Sandra cried out. "Only I can't stay anyhow. I — I *have* to work — I *have* to go back, don't you see?" She wondered, with a kind of vexed pity, why it should be so hard to make them understand what was so plain to herself; and went on trying to explain with an insistence that was growing somewhat hysterical when Mr. Boardman cut her short abruptly.

"Very well, Sandra, you can go back if you want to so much. Don't let's have any more talk about it!" he said. And there fell that awed silence which occasionally follows a paternal decision not too pleasantly announced.

"Dad, I —" Sandra began and halted. She had been about to say that she knew it was costing him a good deal and that she would pay him back as soon as she was able, but the words stuck in her throat. Even if he was not

affronted by the suggestion, he would not believe that she could carry it out. He did not believe in her; none of them believed in her. Mrs. Alexander may have been an exception, but she sat silent, looking at her granddaughter speculatively. No revelation of youthful selfishness or ambition, justifiable or not, could move Mrs. Alexander much, to outward seeming, at least.

"You found the banking association cheques convenient, didn't you?" Sandra's father asked presently. "I'll get you some more —"

"It — it won't take — I don't want very much —" Sandra faltered unhappily.

"Everett can see about your ticket tomorrow," Richard went on in a manner that closed her mouth again. "Just now I'm rather busy, but Everett always has plenty of time." If there was a trace of bitterness in the last words, Sandra was too absorbed in her own affairs to distinguish it. She had not observed whether her brother was busy or not; he still had his position with Mr. Arnold.

CHAPTER IV

AMONG the first acquaintances Sandra encountered on her return to New York was, oddly enough, the most recent one, Mr. Max Levison, whom she met on Fifth Avenue just outside a famous hotel. Strictly speaking, they did not meet, for Mr. Levison overtook her, a few steps past the impressive wrought-iron-and-glass entrance, breathing a little hurriedly as if he might have made some haste about it.

"Say, is this the way you treat your friends — people you know, I mean? Go right by 'em without taking any notice?" he said with a species of forced and hollow jocularity; Sandra, turning at the voice in her ear with a start, perceived even in her surprise, that for all the freedom of this address, Mr. Levison was in reality quaking in one of his seizures of diffidence.

"Oh, Mr. Levison! Why, I didn't see you! I didn't know I had gone right by you!" she assured him with the unnecessary warmth to which this exhibition always moved her; and gave him her hand, which he hesitated over and at last took gingerly, as before.

"I was right there in the window. I don't see how you missed me," said he; and without further question fell into step by her side. Sandra had time to reflect on the refreshing lack of sophistication which assumed first that she would walk along staring into hotel windows, or even so much as glancing in that direction, and secondly that his company would be so welcome, when he spoke again. "You've got back, I see."

"Yes, I'm back," said Sandra, quelling a desire to retort

oh, no, she was not back, she was in Timbuctoo! Setting apart her instinctive knowledge that that sort of lightness would not do at all with Levison, she was somehow aware that he was not dull, he was merely more or less crippled by bashfulness — and that was strange too, she thought, for it was only too apparent that he came of a race whose distinguishing trait is not bashfulness — rather the reverse.

“ Well, I guess you showed ’em something about dancing back in the old home town, Podunk-on-the-Miami, hey? ” was his next remark, made with the same desperate false ease, of which he seemed immediately to repent. “ Oh, say, I’m not making fun of it, you know, I — I was just talking. It’s a nice place. I know some people there named Hirsch — Dr. David Hirsch — he’s a dentist.”

Sandra said obligingly that she had heard of Dr. Hirsch, who indeed was an eminent person in his professional sphere. Mr. Levison then remarked that these specialists generally made a good deal — they could charge almost anything they wanted to; and for his part, he thought it was all right; they did a lot in charity, too, and if they got even by soaking *him*, or some other fellow that they thought had the — the goods, you know, why, you couldn’t altogether blame them. He never kicked about a doctor’s bill; he just came across with the amount, and hoped he wouldn’t have another — he never had had very many, in fact, he’d always had first-class health; but doctors earned their money in the long run. ’Lo, Charlie! How’s everything? All to the mustard, hey?

The last part of this speech was delivered — not without relief, as if he were snatching at a chance to interrupt his own unwilling but apparently uncontrollable flow of words — at a short, stout gentleman, very much dressed, with whom they almost collided in the crowd. He did not at

first see Miss Boardman, then copied Levison's gesture, taking off his hat with a rapid inventorying glance. The Avenue swallowed him up, leaving her with an impression of dazzlingly polished boots, and the latest thing in haberdashery.

"That's Charlie Rosenberg," said Levison, as they went on. And he suddenly asked "What are you doing now, Miss Boardman?"

"What am I doing now?" repeated Sandra, taken by surprise.

"Yes. Have you got into anything? You finally turned Suydam down, I understand. There might have been something in that — a person never can tell. But of course you know what you want to do."

Sandra stared at him, dumbfounded. Suydam was the young man of the Astorbilt tea-room enterprise. "How — how did you know?" she stammered at length.

"Oh, I know him; I know lots of 'em. You know who I am, don't you? Well, then!" Levison said, with an expressive shrug. "I keep a line on a whole lot of people. That's what I'm for — partly." The unnatural manner dropped from him as he spoke; it was plain that Mr. Levison's foot was on his native heath now. "As I was saying, that Astorbilt business — you may have made a mistake there. There's more future to it than you think. That's how the Claudes got their start, and Miss So-and-So —" he named her — "and this young Whoosis, her dancing-partner. She began on the stage, and never got a look-in — absolutely never was nearer the spot-light than number six counting from the end, third row back, the one with the red tassel on her spear. Well, then, somehow or other, she got hold of this young fellow and I don't know which one of 'em had the idea, or what kind of a steer they had, but the dancing-craze came on, and the

first thing you know they're It! Of course she has to keep everlastingly at it — something new every other minute, and costumes from Lucile, and her picture in fourteen different poses in the ladies' magazines every issue — she's got a pretty busy little press-agent, that girl has; that counts some," Mr. Levison wound up. "But you see how it is. There's something in it."

"Well, I — I wasn't thinking —" Sandra began confusedly. The man meant well, she thought; how could he understand her attitude towards her art, he whose sole measure was dollars and cents? And after all, the commercial side was not to be ignored — that was the troubling thing! If you want to know whether what you do is worth anything, try to sell it!

"You've got something else in view?" Levison inquired.

"Why, Mr. de Voyna —"

Levison made a sound that was almost a snarl. "De Voyna! Why, Miss Boardman, you can't put any reliance on people like him. Now he's started this school, he'll have troubles of his own, anyway. He won't have the time to do anything for you, and I doubt if he ever could do much. He wouldn't know how to push you, and you've got to be pushed. Oh, I'm not saying you haven't got the talent and all that —" he interrupted himself with sudden anxious vehemence — "You've got talent to burn. As far as talent goes, you're right at the top. But nobody can get anywhere on talent. You've got to bang the big bell for all you're worth, or nobody'll even know you're around!"

He was so disinterested, so much in earnest, so desirous of giving her what he considered much-needed advice that Sandra found herself replying to him more openly and argumentatively than she would have believed possible a while before. "But suppose I don't care about that kind

of success, Mr. Levison? Where you go after people and drum them up, and get yourself talked about, and — and bang the big bell all the time. That's just cheap popularity, or notoriety; that isn't —" And here Miss Boardman coloured and hesitated but finally brought the word out — "that isn't fame."

He did not laugh; indeed, it was obvious that laughter was the farthest thing in the world from his mind, and the genuine gravity of his answer and manner was an unconscious compliment. "Fame? Yes, I used to have that bug, too. I know how you feel about it. But say, listen! What's the difference? Between fame and notoriety, I mean? Hey, what's the difference? One sounds a little better than the other, that's all. And popularity isn't ever cheap; you've got to go after it, and work and slave and lay awake nights planning for it. You can't get anything easy. I know all that stuff about Art for Art's sake and all the rest of it, but say, listen! It doesn't hurt your Art to make it pay. You can dance just as well if you're getting five hundred or a thousand a week for it, as if you were dancing for Art, and nothing on the side. I've known lots of the big ones — actors, singers, all of 'em — and they're keen after the dollars. They've got to be! There isn't anything low about it. Say, listen! There's only one kind of success. That's *success*! I was pretty sure you had some of these high-brow ideas, but — *My God!*" Levison ejaculated with an explosive Israelitish gesture; "My God, you've got to get over 'em, art or no art!"

"Maybe I will, Mr. Levison, I'll — I'll try!" said Sandra hastily, in terror of the notice her companion might attract. "You — you're ever so kind to tell me —" She stopped, turning suggestively. "This is my corner. Good —"

"Hey? Oh, you live down that way?" said Levison, nodding towards the row of brown-stone fronts. "Which house is it?"


She told him perforce, though after a blank moment which should have been a sufficient hint, she thought. It did not penetrate Levison, however.

"Number Nineteen? I've been wondering where you lived," he remarked, keeping pace with her as before! And he went on talking energetically in the same strain to the flight of steps, and up them to the very door, where he shook hands with her, and took his leave with the announcement that he was going to come around some night, and "talk this thing over with her." There was no want of "push" about *him*, at any rate, once he was set in motion, Sandra reflected with a laugh.

All the same, she admitted reluctantly that there was truth in what he said. It was, of course a poor pot-boiling morality to preach; but no real art could be the worse for being advertised with trumpets and banners and sold at an inflated figure; there was no reason why it should be affected at all. If Mr. Levison should carry out his intention and "come around" with some sort of business proposal — and Sandra suspected with a slight flutter that that was what he had in mind — she would at least listen to him. That involved no descent from high ideals.

However he did not "come around"; it was some time before Sandra saw him again. She read among the bulletins of theatrical folk that he had gone to Europe with a pocketful of contracts on the trail of various celebrities. It began to be very hot, and the native population fled to be replaced by Western and Mid-Western visitors sight-seeing or pausing to shop on their way to the coast resorts. Sandra now regarded them with metropolitan callousness although not infrequently there were people she knew

among them — people from home. More than once, indeed, she deliberately evaded them, turning off at a corner, or dashing across the Avenue in a crowd of traffic where she calculated these provincials would not venture. She felt a morose disinclination to meeting them, to answering their questions, to accepting or offering perfunctory civilities. The root of the trouble was that our young friend Miss Boardman, not having yet abandoned the idea — if indeed any one of us ever wholly abandons it — that she was a person of as much importance to the world as to herself, now suffered from the sub-conscious feeling that everybody by this time must be expecting her to do something, was looking for her head to appear above the ruck, that there was a general demand for her to justify herself, to “make good,” in short, as Mr. Levison would undoubtedly have said; and she was not doing anything, nor was there any immediate prospect of her doing anything! She went back to her hall-bedroom every night, and waked up therein every morning, surveying it with incredible despondency; never since it was built, had that bare, contracted, not too well-kept place been the object of so clinging an affection. Sandra contemplated with harassing anxiety the change not to a barer, dirtier, cheaper room and boarding-house, but to her own room in her own home! Yes, it was those baskets of ribbons and roses, it was the dainty apartment her poor mother had been at such pains to prettify for her that the girl did not want to see. But that calamity loomed imminent. She could not continue in New York without presently asking her father for more money, and she could not bend her pride to that. In conscience, she had had enough already. She began a feverish practice of economies, mending un-mend-able gloves, darning stockings that ought to have been in the rag-bag; she covered reams of note-paper (with the Boardman crest



of a phoenix and their motto '*Resurgam*' on it) with schedules of expenses to which no mortal given the same means could have managed to adhere. It was a melancholy time, and not less so because Sandra realized that to many, many people she would have been merely silly; the sum that seemed to her so insufficient would have been affluence to them. She was not starving, she was not in want; she could go and be safe and taken care of, any moment that she chose. Her tragedy was ridiculous, and Sandra knew it.

About this time, Mary Schultze came to her one day with the timid request that she would show Gus some dance-steps. Mr. Beckley had never taken the time for this particular accomplishment, and now — "He feels awfully out of it, whenever we go to a café, or almost anywhere. Nobody does anything but dance, and he says he feels like a perfect *rube*, but he'd look like a worse one getting up and not trying without knowing how. Besides, you know you get asked to places a lot oftener, and it makes you ever so much more popular, if you're a good dancer. If you just *would*?" said Mary wistfully. "I don't think he'll be hard; I think he'll pick it up pretty quick. He used to play the banjo a little. I can dance myself — nothing grand, of course, but I can do all right if I'm with some man that knows how to lead. But I couldn't teach anybody to save my life. Anyhow, I wouldn't want to begin on Gus somehow. He wouldn't take anything from me, but *you* would be different. If you just *would*?"

Sandra acquiesced; she could not find it in her heart to refuse, and was too humane or perhaps simply too manly to betray the ironic mirth to which this, the single outcome of all her work and dreams and trials, moved her. The other might think that she was laughing at the idea of

teaching Gus Beckley, whereas in truth Sandra was laughing quite as much at herself. "It may do me good to practise teaching anyhow," the girl told herself with what philosophy she could muster. The grapes were so very, very sour that she deserves some credit for swallowing them gallantly.

Thereafter, one night or another through the week, the three young people, occasionally augmented by a fourth, some bookkeeping or typewriting friend of Gus's or Mary's, rolled up and shoved aside the "Art Square" which covered the middle of the parlour floor, moved back the plush chairs, set the Victorgraph going, and fell to work, with alternate fits of laughter and seriousness. They were under bond to Mrs. Tower who feared for her other boarders, not to keep it up more than an hour; indeed, had it not been for the fact that the house emptied as summer advanced save for a stray "transient" now and then whose evenings were always spent elsewhere among the sights, she warned them they would have had to forego these studies. "It doesn't make much difference right now, but you young folks will have to do your dancing at the regular dance-places, the minute my season opens," she proclaimed roundly. "You can't raise that rag-time racket under people's heads that want to go to sleep, I don't care how much of a craze it is."

"You should worry about next season!" Gus observed sardonically. "By that time, just as I've got so I can steer a girl around the room without walking all over her, or up some other fellow's back, why, dancing will go out entirely, and they'll be doing something else — aeroplaning, likely!"

Mr. Beckley, nevertheless, was not so dull a pupil as might be inferred from his gloomy self-depreciation. He had a sufficiently good ear and sense of rhythm; and suc-

ceeded amazingly as long as he had Sandra for a partner. "Anybody could dance with *her*, though. You don't feel as if you were holding anything at all. She goes right around with you no matter what kind of weird steps you take. She's a wonder!" he said to Mary, lost in enthusiasm.

"Of course! She's almost a professional. And then you're learning yourself, Gus. You can dance as well as anybody," said Mary loyally and without jealousy.

"Sure I can! I've got all those Russian stars beat a mile!" Mr. Beckley declared in fine irony. "Honestly I'd hate to get up at a *tay-donsong*, for fear of making all the other men feel bad!"

"We ought to go to the Astorbilt or some place some time. You and Miss Boardman could dance."

"She'd just love it, of course!" said Gus in the same vein; then he scowled thoughtfully at his cigarette. "All the same seems as if we ought to do something for her before long, Mary. It makes me uncomfortable not to pay her, because you bet it's *work* teaching me to dance!" he avowed with conviction. "We made a big mistake in the beginning not putting this thing on a business basis. Trouble was, it seemed so awkward with a girl like her. I didn't know how to go at it, scarcely. I thought I'd put it off till I got to know her better; but after a couple of months, it's awkwarder than ever."

"Well, you've always brought a box of candy, and tried to do everything you could for her," Mary pointed out. "It isn't as if you had gone ahead without showing any appreciation. I really don't believe she's ever thought of your paying her. I don't know what you *could* do, unless entertain her somewhere, like I was saying."

"Well, I couldn't take her to the Astorbilt, that's one certain thing. I couldn't *reach*," said the young fellow,

illustrating his metaphor with a gesture. "Those places just tipping the hat-boy busts you. But there's other kinds of funny little joints that strangers like to go to," he added meditatively. "Say, Mary, that's an idea."

CHAPTER V

SANDRA revised her first impulse to decline the Schultze-Beckley invitation upon the recollection that she had declined rather too many such invitations already. Mrs. Richard herself would have advised acceptance, arguing that another of these systematic refusals might reasonably give offence; and to hurt the feelings of harmless, well-meaning, second-class people was the lowest crime in a gentlewoman's calendar. So Miss Boardman agreed to go with the carefully acted spontaneity her mother also enjoined in such circumstances. Make a round of the little cafés some night? Why, grand! Wouldn't that be fun! She gave so finished a representation of enthusiasm that Mary was led into the familiarity of an allusion to Mr. Thatcher.

"You don't care, of *course*, but I'd like it ever so much better if he could be there," she said roguishly.

"Well, he can't. He's out West, a thousand or two miles off!" said Sandra, reddening.

"What, you know where he is every minute of the time? Isn't that *strange*?"

The two girls looked at each other, and Sandra began to laugh with the other in spite of herself. Her mother would not have approved; her mother would have warned her that once you let a person like Mary Schultze become too intimate, you are committed irrevocably to the intimacy, which is certain to prove irksome sometime. But Alexandra had been thinking lately that her mother, while the dearest and sweetest that ever lived, and of course thor-

oughly qualified to advise on some social matters, was often mistaken in her judgments and outlook — or if not mistaken, sadly limited.

Mr. Beckley brought home on the appointed evening a Mr. Bert Givens who had made a fourth on some of their evenings before, though *hors concours* as regarded dancing, as little in need of instruction as Sandra herself. "Bert's a bear at it!" Augustus would say. He was in the men's wear department at McChesney's, so naturally *hors concours* in the matter of dress, too, a slender, pallid and extraordinarily natty youth with his hair brushed sleekly back, and a tie and socks in tender summer hues. Although somewhat taken with Sandra, he was still capable of surveying her with a coldly technical eye, and wondering how it was that she managed to create so "nifty" an effect in a white suit which was past the prime of fashion. She had style, he decided; and in truth, the girl did have a style of her own, like her good looks elusive yet authentic.

The young men, between them, had made up a list of "joints" worth visiting — "The Green Bough," "Tony's," "All-the-Arts," and so on. "We thought we'd take the 'bus down to Washington Square, and beginning at this end, work around in a sort of a circle till we got back — Greenwich Village, MacDougal, Waverly Place, all through that art student district," Gus explained. "A man I know told me the best places to go to. They aren't any of 'em tough — just kind of queer and go-as-you-please-y, you know. They mostly set a cheap table d'hôte dinner — he said the eating was often pretty good, though — and there's always a weird, long-haired crowd. I thought it would be interesting for Miss Boardman, coming here from the West, to see that side of life here."

"Well, I come from the North — from Hundred-and-

Twenty-Eighth Street," said Givens facetiously; "and I've never seen that side of life here either. Real New Yorkers don't. Do they dance, d'you know?"

"Sure. Dance on the tables, I guess, if you want to. Everything goes down there, they say — within limits, of course," Mr. Beekley hastened to add, perceiving alarm on Mary's face. Both the young men noticed that Miss Boardman remained undisturbed; apparently she did not care whether the entertainment was respectable or not.

However, the first resorts they entered were respectable to an almost disappointing degree. In one there was a quartette of "Plantation Melodists" as they were entitled on the establishment's cards, four negroes, attired as for the minstrel stage, and going through a program of songs and monologues, than which no drearier parody of either fun or sentiment could be imagined. At another a fat, very blonde woman wandered among the cabaret tables, pausing here and there to sing a verse or two pointedly at one of the masculine patrons to the hysterically extravagant amusement of his party. "That's all fixed up beforehand, of course. They all belong to some troupe," Augustus observed cynically. Upon his motion, they went on; and next they came to some half-dozen of girls shepherded by a wizened young gentleman playing alternately the violin or piano, as the musical score demanded, and a tall lank older man whose instrument was the drum, and who seemed to be the leader of the whole flock. The girls were dressed in sprigged muslins with fichus, and corkscrew curls of the crinoline period; and one after another they arose and rendered ditties about the moon being bright and the breeze so light under the Southern skies, or rhythmically announced that there're a hundred thousand girls but not a one like you-oo-oo, So true-oo-oo, With eyes so blue-oo-oo — until Bert Givens in his own language, balked

at hearing any more of it. He said this thing was getting on his nerves.

"That outfit is the Methodist Church Choir from New Galilee, Connecticut, I'll bet!" said he. "Full of pep, aren't they? Night life in a great city, hey? Isn't it dizzy, though, Miss Boardman? And where do we dance? They all have cards up saying you can, but I haven't seen a decent floor yet. What's next, Gus?" He took the list and ran over it. "We don't seem to have had much luck playing these sure things in order. Let's take a long shot — how about the Restaurant Continentale?"

To the Restaurant Continentale they went accordingly, and found it bigger and more brilliant than any of those yet visited, with a fine, wide, smooth expanse of dancing-floor, from which the surrounding border of tables was divided by rich red velvet ropes. A band of dark-skinned artists in white shirts and trousers and scarlet sashes, with wreaths of scarlet flowers slung about their necks, discoursed tuneful and eminently dance-able music from the dais at one end.

"Hawaiians," Givens murmured knowingly. "Hawaiians from up here between Avenue A and East River. They say there're more Italians there than in Naples. Say, this is something like, don't you think? More atmosphere to it, somehow."

Gus remarked epigrammatically that you might call it atmosphere — to him it seemed two-thirds solid tobacco-smoke! But young Givens was right, as their whole party presently felt, looking about with quickened spirits. Whatever they understood by the term, this was what they had been seeking. Besides the tobacco-smoke, one was conscious of bizarre odours of garlic-flavoured cookery, cheap wines, cheap perfumes; the noise had the unfamiliar character of alien tongues; there was no great difference

in appearance between the swarthy, moustached, effervescing men, the chromo-like women (some of them with moustaches, too!) at the tables, and the performers on the platform. Strangest thing of all, there were numbers of children; and near by a portly, middle-aged man was feeding the year-old baby on his fat knees with bits of bread sopped in the thick, gravy-like soup in front of him.

"Well, this is Little Italy and Little Spain and Little Holland and Little Everywhere," Mary ejaculated. "Did you *ever*! Do you believe it's clean?"

"I like it," said Sandra.

They found a table, and the young men, after a consultation with the opera-bouffe looking waiter, ordered spaghetti and cheese and rye bread and some of the dark wine which they observed their neighbours to be drinking out of bulb-shaped bottles cased in basket-work. Bert Givens hardily got out his cigarette-case.

"You don't mind, do you?" he asked Sandra who smilingly shook her head. Somehow Bert had a notion that Miss Boardman was much more of a sport—in a perfectly ladylike way, of course—than the other girl. "Newport—Lenox—Long Island—that brand," he thought, pluming himself on his discernment and knowledge of the world. "They do whatever they want to, those girls. They're too way-up to care what people think."

One of the Hawaiians got up and sang in an agreeable throaty baritone some Venetian boating-song with a long-drawn falling refrain, that drew vigorous applause from all around the room; everybody hammered lustily, calling for a repetition which the soloist obligingly accorded.

"Catchy thing, that," said Gus, although he found to his surprise, upon essaying, that he could not catch it;

people around them were humming and whistling it, under the breath, with the singer. "These dagoes are full of music — just full of it," he said, wagging his head appreciatively.

"Not any fuller than Miss Boardman here," Givens said, seeing her make some slight answering movement at the opening bars of a *czárdas* the musicians had now begun. She did not beat time; it was as if the music pulsed through her whole body. "She's just like one of 'em."

"Why, Mr. Givens!" Mary uttered, shocked.

"I only meant kind of foreign, you know — I — I —"

"Oh, I don't mind!" Sandra assured him, laughing. She fell to on the pungent dishes with frank zest. Mary minced politely in her plate. She was quite sure that the place was not clean, and was, moreover, possessed by a vague uneasiness about it and about her companions. The men liked that nasty, sour wine too much, and they were getting altogether too free-and-easy smoking and talking — even Gus, who had always shown himself such a gentleman. Miss Boardman seemed to be perfectly reckless, and evidently had no idea (or else didn't care) how conspicuous she was with that chalky-white face and thin red lips and black hair and black eyes. Sundry young men — perfect strangers! — had walked up and down past their table and stared at her; Mary's conviction that they were not staring at herself was as well-grounded as it was unconsciously pathetic. She wished uncomfortably that they had stopped in one of the other cafés where you understood what the people were singing and talking about, at least. This was so strange and outlandish. Even the familiar strains of "*I like a chicken in the spring-time*" failed to reassure her.

"Dance?" said young Givens to Sandra. They stood up.

"Nobody's on the floor yet. You don't want to be the only ones, do you?" Mary faintly expostulated.

"Oh, piffle! Why not?" said Bert discourteously.

"You and Mr. Beckley come along then, and keep us company," said Sandra as she and Givens moved off. A few more couples appeared; so Gus and Mary followed them, at first with misgivings, then in rapidly increasing confidence.

"I believe I've got the hang of it at last, Mary. We aren't having any trouble."

"Oh, Gus, it's lovely!" breathed Mary ecstatically, all her trouble momentarily forgotten.

But a new one was in store. The last chord was thrummed, blared and pounded out; they were just sitting down, both men had gone off to waylay the waiter for ice-water, when the music began again, a one-step this time, and — horrors! One of those piratical starers walked up to Miss Boardman with as much confidence as if he had known her all his life, and said in hissing syllables under his little black moustache: "You dance zees wiss me, *señorita*, please? You gif me mooch delight?" And horrors upon horrors, Miss Boardman did it!

"Hello, what's become of our other girl?" said Bert Givens, returning; a form of inquiry which showed what a damaging effect the "atmosphere" had already had upon *him*, too. But alas, Mr. Beckley had also succumbed to it; for, upon being informed what had occurred, he merely said: "Had his nerve, didn't he? Got a cigarette, Bert?" And Bert said that any girl that could dance like that was bound to be popular!

They watched Sandra circle for a while, presently with another olive-complexioned partner and dancing another step of such complications that only one or two couples attempted it; and, at the next pause, a big young man in

what Miss Schultze called a sailor-suit with *U. S. S. Louisiana* in gold letters around the band of his cap, rose from a table where he had been sitting with three more sailor-suits, and standing in front of Sandra, said in a boyishly grave, direct manner: "You're the professional here, aren't you, Miss? I'd like the next, if you please."

"All right," said Sandra, conveniently forgetting to clear up the question of her status in the Restaurant Continentale. She danced with all the sailors from the battleship *Louisiana* in turn. They were nice boys. "I suppose they'd have to go and fight if we ever got into a war. And if they're good enough to fight for me, they're good enough to dance with me!" said Alexandra Boardman to herself. I think the shade of that stout old mariner, Commodore Chase, though he doubtless observed the line between enlisted men and officers with the utmost severity, would have looked upon his granddaughter with approval. And when one of them, with a hesitating gallantry invited her to sit down with them and "have something," she was not in the least insulted.

"Oh, thank you, but the management doesn't allow it," she said glibly in the hearing of the appalled Mary, and to the amusement of their two escorts. Young Givens shook his head at Miss Boardman, grinning.

"That was a quick come-back!" said he, not without real admiration. One of the sailors directing a shrewd glance around the party, drew Bert aside, and spoke confidentially under cover of a vocal selection by the musicians during an interval while the dancers rested.

"Say, the kid made a kind of a break, didn't he? Offering to treat, you know? Say, she's some swell dame out for a good time, she don't belong here, hey? You don't any of you belong here, honest?"

"Why — er — that's all right!" drawled Bert, dis-

sembling an immense inward gratification. "That's perfectly all right — er — old chap!" It was a superb moment — for a clerk in the men's wear department at McChesney's.

But now, as they sat near the musicians' stand, a short, bald man whom they might have noticed before undemonstratively active about the place, came towards them, singling Sandra out and looking her over with a keen but not unfriendly eye. In fact, he smiled benevolently, while revealing the fact that he was the "management." "Where do you dance regularly?" he wanted to know. And then some expression he saw or fancied he saw on her face moved him to add quickly: "I mean what theatre? I know you don't dance in my cabaret." As Sandra stood before him, still dumb, Mr. Richter — he was a Swiss by birth, a naturalized American now, but a native of every country on this created globe if travel, experience and familiarity count for anything — had another illumination. "Eh? You'd rather not say?" he said, smiling more broadly and benevolently than ever.

"I'd rather dance," Sandra said; and at that instant the band struck into Sinding's tarantelle. "I'll dance that!" said the girl, upon what wild impulse she never could tell.

Richter stared for half a second; then with a lightning readiness, he wheeled, shouted an order at the orchestra, silencing them, seized Sandra by the hand and led her to the centre of the room, bawled some announcement to the company, repeating it in half a dozen languages with equal speed and facility, signalled to the music again, and bowed himself back from the girl with a flourish. The guitars hummed resonantly, the castanets bickered, Sandra danced.

She was scarcely conscious of anything but the music.

The crowd, some of them standing on chairs and tables, the four sailors gaping transfixed, Mary Schultze shrinking into the background, Richter's smiling face — she saw them as she heard the rising applause, or felt the heat, or the waxed floor beneath her swift feet, as mere incidents. She came to her senses (as she said afterwards) only towards the finale when there burst out a great uproar of cheering, stamping and clapping, and some Latin enthusiast threw down a handful of money at her feet, thereby setting a fashion; it rattled all around her and a dollar struck her on the shoulder. She bowed and smiled by a kind of instinct.

Here another impossible thing occurred; it was a night of impossible happenings. To wit: Mr. Max Levison turned up in the exact nick of time, with the precision of melodrama, a god from the machine. He turned up to some purpose, shouldering through the audience, and grasping Sandra's arm. "That's right! Just bow! Don't give 'em any *encore* — don't you do it! Just bow!" he admonished her energetically. "Hey? How'd I get here?" He laughed as he echoed her dazed question. "Why, I often come here. I just happered in to-night, though — just happened in. How's that for luck, hey? The Lord loves the Irish, don't he?" And here Mr. Levison, apparently realizing fully the depth of difference between his own race and that which he named, and savouring an exquisite joke in the juxtaposition, chuckled with intense relish. Al the while he was steadily making their way towards the exit. "That's all right. I'll get you out of it — yes, I spoke to Richter just now — he understands — he knows me — I've been coming here for years. I hadn't a notion of finding *you* here, though. How's that for luck? This is the time for you to make your get-away, see? Right now, see?" said Mr. Levison

whose equipment as a manager of theatrical enterprises evidently included a fine sense of climax. "It makes a better effect, don't you see? Hey, taxi! Call a taxi out there! Beg pardon, Miss Boardman?" At last pausing to catch what Sandra had been trying to tell him for the last two minutes, he immediately altered the order. "Hey! Call two taxis! Your party, did you say? Where are they? Oh — er — Mr. Er —! Pleased to meet you. Come on now, everybody!"

CHAPTER VI

SANDRA used to say that her sudden attainment of fame — or that popularity or notoriety which Levison contended amount to the same thing — was due to luck, nothing but luck. People thought this a mere piece of posing with her, but she was honest. If she had not gone with Mary and Gus and Bert that evening, if they had not stumbled on the Café Continentale, if she had not been insanely prompted to dance, if Levison had chosen some other place of entertainment — in fine, if nothing had happened which did happen, nobody knows how long she might have been on the difficult climb, if indeed she ever arrived. Thus Sandra argued to herself, and would have argued to any one that inquired, if Levison had not counselled otherwise; if he had not forbade her, in truth.

“ You don’t know how to put up a front, so you’d better not talk at all. It makes a better effect anyhow, see? Unapproachable — that’s your style. It doesn’t make people mad — not if it’s done right. They kind of like it. You’re Sandra, you know. *The Sandra* — the only Sandra! Nobody can get at you at all. You don’t go anywhere except with some regular strong-arm of a lady’s-maid and chaperon with a thirty-degrees-below-zero eye. You came down to the theatre every night in the limousine, and who is this that meets you at the stage-door, and sends the dress-suit lads, and the club rounders and the college-boys on their way? Who but trusty Max, the heroine’s faithful follower? Who kindly but firmly inter-

views the newspaper-man, and the photographer and the ladies' tailor and the beauty-doctor and the costume-shark and all the rest? Max again! He'll give 'em all the facts they want, and even some things that aren't facts. But no use for the public in general to try to see Sandra. It's not that you're ungracious — oh, far, far from that! You love the dear public, only you can't stand it. It gets your artistic sensibilities all frazzled up. You'd fly to pieces — blow up — die right then and there! That's your style!" Mr. Levison pronounced genially but imperatively.

Sandra acquiesced readily enough; he was actually not far out in his jocose analysis of her temperament; and though she knew perfectly well that this guarded isolation, this ostentatious hedging about with mystery were only more of Levison's many devices to whet the public interest and curiosity, to bang the big bell, in short, she was too relieved and too inordinately grateful to him to care.

For it seemed to Sandra that, after luck, Levison had done everything for her, although the truth was she did not know what he had done, did not know exactly what anybody had done in the excitement and scrambling hurry of the days following that Continentale episode. She always remembered with a vivid fidelity the strange look and smell and feeling of the little empty Theatre of the Marionettes, the morning she went down to dance. It was being renovated before the opening of the season the first week in October, and there was scaffolding up, and dirty drab cloths spread over the seats, and the pretty Pompadour decorations, crystal pendants, fragile gilded mouldings were hardly visible by a light half artificial. She remembered the serious, intent and alert face of the Italian orchestra-leader below her, his moving baton, his attention miraculously divided between herself and the

score; the musicians, strings, brasses and wood-winds, in shirt-sleeves mostly and not greatly interested for their part, sawing and blowing; the stage-hands, and carpenters, arrested in their duties, looking on from the step-ladders and platforms; a white blur out there amongst the farthest orchestra-chairs which she knew to be Mr. Charles Rosenberg's summer-suit; and near at hand, quite distinguishable in one of the stage boxes, the other Rosenberg, listening silently while Levison talked in a lowered voice with those Israelitish gestures to which he reverted in moments of forgetfulness. Afterwards the coloured woman in the dressing-room helped her change back to her street-clothing; and the three Jewish gentlemen took her somewhere to an office where another Jewish gentleman, an attorney-at-law, as it appeared, offered her something to sign; and she signed it, and they all signed it; and she remembered the odd expression with which the other Rosenberg read out her name as he looked at the paper.

"Boardman! You can't put that over. Boardman — *Nah!* What are you going to do 'bout that, Maxy?"

Levison considered a brief moment. "Well, her name's Alexandra — Sandra for short. What's the matter with calling her Mademoiselle Sandra? Or no! — Say, listen! Call her La Sandra. That'll go big on the bill-boards. La Sandra. Some name, hey?"

Charles Rosenberg said: "Uh-huh." But the other Rosenberg, the older one, who had been lighting a cigar, made a slight negative motion of the head; then he announced an Olympian decision.

"*Nah!* You're 'way off. Call her Sandra. Just Sandra and no *dees* nor *lahs* nor frills to it. Sandra."

After a pause, Levison said: "Well, that listens all right to *me*." Which apparently settled the question, Sandra herself not having been consulted at all. Perhaps this

was just as well, for, as she confessed to Levison afterwards, she felt as if she were in a trance.

"I don't have to do anything but dance — that's all I *can* do, anyhow. But I don't have to worry about those other things, do I?" she asked childishly.

Mr. Levison informed her that she sure didn't! "Your interests are going to be looked after by your uncle, and you can believe he's not going to go to sleep over 'em. I mean me — Max himself," he added, interpreting correctly her bewildered look; and he laughed, observing that they often acted dazed that way — "But it doesn't last long — the daze doesn't!"

However, either he was sometimes mistaken, or Sandra was an exception; for months later, there would still be moments when the girl felt as if she were going about in a dream, completely mistress of herself only while dancing, at which times indeed she had always been most collected and aware. Her nerves that were unstable enough ordinarily, her slight frame that looked as brittle as the stem of a flower, could both endure and execute with astounding strength, vigour, reliability, when called upon; they never failed her. The puzzle, the thing that gave her an ever-present sense of unreality was the stupefying ease with which the heights had been reached. Of stage-life she saw scarcely any more than in previous experiences as an amateur; in private she worked with the same ambition and constancy; she still had times of discouragement, she was still always trying to do her best and still never quite doing it, never satisfying her own ideals; nothing about herself had undergone the least change — yet now she was Sandra, *the* Sandra, even as Levison said! She had naïvely expected some tremendous, some vital difference — and lo, here was no difference whatever.

No difference except as concerned worldly goods, that

is. Sandra surveyed her first cheque in the same chaos of wonder and disbelief and humbleness of spirit and gratified vanity with which she heard her first round of applause, and bowed to her first curtain-call. She had never earned a penny in her life; it was more in one lump than her father could have afforded to give her in a year; more, she divined, than many a man of her acquaintance made in a like short period. And this was only the beginning, Levison told her. "If they think I'm worth that much, I'll *show* them!" she thought arrogantly; and then, with a flash of terror that maybe she would never be able to do so well again, that she might lose her powers, that she ought to have begun long ago — long ago. She sat down and wrote to the family at home. ". . . I didn't tell you anything about it, because I knew you would object, and I didn't want to make you feel badly, or to have any fuss. It seems underhanded, but I thought it was best . . . I have wanted to do something like this (I didn't quite know what) for a long while, and now I am doing it, and getting along all right, as you see, so you don't need to worry over me any more. I can take care of myself. I want Dad to take out the money I owe him, and put the rest in bank; I didn't know quite how much it was, but am sending enough, I think, to cover it. Mr. Levison has given me the name of a banking-firm here, people he knows, Kahn, Loew & Company, that I am going to open an account with . . . I suppose people at home as soon as they find out who 'Sandra' is, will talk like everything, but it doesn't make any difference about them. I mean whatever they think and say is of no consequence . . .

"The Marionettes is a new theatre that the Rosenbergs started here last year . . . They do have the smartest posters; Mr. Levison told me he had to pay fifteen hundred

for just one of the 'Little Bo-Peep' bills, but he says it was worth it, for you can't pass it by. The artist was K——. Of course they get the very highest-paid men, the very best. . . . The scenery and costumes are by the same sort of people, perfectly stunning. You ought to see mine for the 'Peacock Dance'; it's cloth of gold and some kind of iridescent gauze changing to steel-blue and purple, and I have to wear a headdress of feathers, with a band and chains of pearls and things — false, of course, but they had to be made especially and cost as much as lots of real tiaras you see. Mr. Levison had it put in the contract that the management were to furnish my costumes, or I don't know where I'd be! In the other, the grotesque dance, where I come on as the Queen of Spades, the top-card in the pack, I have a very Chinese-y costume of black and blue and jade-green brocade with magnificent embroideries that are the real thing, imported from China, and huge silk-and-bead tassels, and red lacquer clogs. This is the dance that made the hit — the *biggest* hit, that is. The music is '*Tambourin Chinois*' by Kreisler, you know; Signor Galetti made an arrangement of it for the orchestra. . . .

"Mr. Levison prophesies three hundred nights for 'Little Bo-Peep'; after that, I suppose they will take it on the road. I don't think I care to travel with a road-show, though most of the company will probably go; Mr. Levison is against it. However, that won't be until next season; when it comes, you must all go and see it. But I wish you could come here and see me in it; I'll send Mother the money if she'll come . . ."

To say that this letter, with something less than a bale of sample posters, advertisements, photographs and newspaper-notices raised the commotion in the Boardman household that Sandra had foreseen and avoided, would

be only partly true. The girl expected to be condemned unreservedly, not reckoning on their pride and their affection. They could not have been angry with her long or deeply in any event, but at first they were too stunned to be angry at all. And, alas for Boardman traditions, the first item that emerged to fix their attention was the figure of Sandra's weekly salary! In fact, families even more exalted, if any such exist, might well have been arrested by it; it was of that incredible spaciousness which we have all read about in connection with the theatrical profession as we read about the dimensions of the Grand Cañon. And money talks; yes, money is most eloquent, whether we will or no, amongst clowns or gentlefolk, Boardmans or nobodies. It went farther than they themselves were aware towards converting the family to the view that Sandra was a great artist, and as such, exempt from judgment — farther than any of her triumphs or achievements. Mrs. Richard, when she at last came to think everything over, was more hurt by Sandra's not unnatural supposition that the family would "make a fuss" than by anything the girl had done or said.

"We wouldn't have said a word. We never have said anything; we have let her do just as she chose. I always knew that Sandra wanted to — to have a *career*. I don't see why she thought we'd stand in her way. It was very unjust of her!"

"Oh, don't talk like that, Lucy! We *would* have objected, of course. I never expected to see a daughter of mine on the stage — but I don't know what we can do about it now. It's all fixed and settled, it seems," said Richard gloomily. "She ought to have told us. Not but that it would probably have turned out the same way in the end; I doubt if we could have stopped her. But she ought to have told us. As it is, outsiders have known

about it before we did — actually they've known more about Sandra's affairs than her own father and mother! I don't like that idea — but it can't be helped now!" He looked at the scintillating amount Sandra named with a return of wonder. "Good gracious, do you suppose they pay them all at this rate? And Sandra seems to be expecting more after a while!"

"Richard, you — you're not going to do that? What Sandra said? Pay yourself out of her money? You're not going to?" his wife asked, somehow a little nervously.

"I'll open an account for her at our bank here," said Sandra's father with something like a sigh.

He lay awake a good while that night, thinking about Sandra when she was a little girl — about a time when he had taken her to a circus — about how he taught her to swim one summer up at Wequetonsing — about some photographs he had made with that old box-camera, the first one they had, of Sandra on the back porch holding Frumpy in her arms, or one of Frumpy's kittens. Good Lord, he had not thought of Frumpy these twenty years; the old cat must have been dead at least that long! It seemed to him the little girl was dead too — dead and gone for ever. He heard a sound by his side that moved him to reach out a hand and to ask gently: "What's the matter, Lucy?"

"Oh, Dick, she said she didn't need us any m-more — that is — it wasn't that exactly, but that's what she meant," sobbed Sandra's mother. "Of course, she's grown up — and making all that money — I don't w-want to be silly, but — but —"

"I know, my dear, I know," said Richard. They tried to comfort each other in the dark.

Afterwards they tried also most gallantly to enact enthusiastic approval; because, as Mrs. Richard pointed out,

it would affect Sandra's art disastrously if she felt that she had displeased them. "I have known her to be terribly upset by a hostile atmosphere or criticism, so that she couldn't dance at all. It's temperament, you know," said the poor lady, clinging desperately, in spite of her sad intuitions, to the figment that parents are necessary to their children. She went about answering questions, smilingly receiving congratulations, writing letters to Sandra full of applause and praise and playful correction — all the while in an inward revolt which she knew to be unreasonable and told herself moreover was unworthy and ungrateful. Why could she not be more glad of having this brilliant and gifted child, why could she not be more proud? Why, indeed? Perhaps the lives of people attached to celebrities are not so interesting and enviable as we are prone to imagine, for, when all's said and done, who really wants to be valet to a hero?

There was one member of the Boardman family, however, who spiritedly refused to be a party to the conspiracy of commendation, and that was Everett. He heard about Sandra's professional debut with acute mortification, equally shocked at the idea of his sister being in such a position and at the deliberate secrecy with which the thing had been accomplished.

"Write to her? Why, I don't know what to say! I can't pretend to be pleased. I don't know what to make of it. I can't imagine what got into Sandra!" he said. "We've once in a while talked about her going on the stage, but I — why, I wasn't in earnest, I didn't for a minute believe she would. I never dreamed of such a thing. I thought this studying dancing was just one of those weird freaks girls take. Like Estelle Aldis going off and setting up that tea-house for motor-tourists, you know. I supposed Sandra was just crazy to do

something, like the rest of them; they think it's the smart thing to do something. But I never thought — Why, it's abominable! And then to go springing it on us this way! She knew we'd never consent in this wide world — she knew *I* wouldn't, anyhow. Good reason she kept it so dark! I hate to think of Sandra running down that way — doing cheap, tricky things like that. It's New York, that's what has done it," said the young man, shaking his head in depression. "It's bound to have an effect on anybody as impressionable as she is. She's got to thinking about money the whole time. Her letters are full of it. Money and some kind of sensational business like this, that's all she cares about. Why, she says so in so many words! What people think and feel here at home is 'of no consequence.' Her family and all her friends that have known her all her life are 'of no consequence'! She did have the grace to keep our name out of it, that's something to be thankful for. I suppose it actually did strike her as a little incongruous to mix up Miss Boardman with a lot of chorus-girls and low comedians and second-rate musicians and Jew theatrical producers like this Levison she keeps referring to every other word. If that fellow didn't start out as Levi's-son, I miss my guess. Max Levison! That name's a give-away! And his friends Kahn, Loew and Company! I expect all that was a little too much even for Sandra," said Everett, fiercely humorous. "Well, you can pretend to like it if you want to. I won't!"

His grandmother broke the painful silence that followed by asking: "Can't you do something, Everett? Couldn't you get Sandra to — to break her contract, if that's the proper term? I mean couldn't you get it annulled somehow?"

"No, no, that couldn't be done. I wouldn't persuade

Sandra to try anything like that," said Everett hastily. Then he explained to the old lady in a manner which he strove to keep from being pitying or patronizing. "You can't do things like that, Grandma. A contract's a contract. And anyhow, think of the publicity!"

"Well, as I understand it, it only lasts for a year, and Sandra doesn't have to renew it," said Mrs. Alexander. "In the meantime, we may as well put the best face we can on the matter."

"I can't put any face on it at all, and I'm not going to try," Everett said implacably. He must have been as good as his word, for in the course of time people shied away from the subject when in his company; they grew wary even of mentioning his sister's name. You might have thought nobody knew he had a sister. And as to Sandra herself, she cried bitterly over the one letter he wrote her.

CHAPTER VII

GOING back through the newspaper-files of 1912-'13, one may gather a prodigious amount of information about "Sandra," so picturesquely varied and contradictory that it is something of an adventure to decide what to believe — if anything! — and what to reject. She was the daughter of a well-known California millionaire, masquerading on the stage under an assumed name; she was a Sicilian girl from some New Orleans slum; she was a Spanish countess with a romantic history; she was a Roumanian gipsy with no history at all — that would bear repeating. The Claudes discovered her, de Voyna discovered her, Rosenberg Brothers discovered her, everybody discovered her except the real discoverer, Max Levison. She got a thousand, two thousand, any number of thousands you choose, a week; some enthusiasts even went so far as to calculate in dollars and cents exactly what she got for every step and every minute of her time during the performance. Her hobbies were uncut rubies, Persian cats, empty bottles, aeroplaning, making cheese, drawing illustrations for the Bible. She would not dance if the leader of the orchestra had blue eyes; she would not dance unless the leader of the orchestra had blue eyes. She spent her leisure at her castle in the Tyrol, her Rocky Mountain cattle-ranch, her estate on Long Island, her coffee plantation in Ceylon. She was born club-footed with one leg shorter than the other, but a marvellous system of physical training had not only corrected these defects but developed her talent. She had had a phenomenal

voice and had been educated for the operatic stage, — but being suddenly struck dumb — as the result of falling down an elevator-shaft from the eleventh floor — at the age of sixteen, she had turned her attention to her present art.

And so on without limit. How much of all this Levison was indirectly responsible for, nobody knows; certainly he himself could not have told. He was incapable of inventing any of it; but native shrewdness, coupled with experience had long ago taught Max the needlessness of inventive effort on his part. There were always stories in circulation, and all he had to do was to hear them with a grunt, a gesture non-committal, or susceptible of any sort of translation. So his star was talked about, he was not too particular as to what was said. At the same time, in a private and personal capacity, Mr. Levison was particular to an extreme, surrounding Sandra with a system of proprieties which scandalous purpose might assail in vain, and of which he constituted himself, as he had promised, the first outwork. Seldom did she appear in public and never on the stage without his shoebrush moustache potentially aggressive in the background. He would always be standing in the wings when she went on for her dances, chewing an unlighted cigar, his quick eyes here, there and everywhere except on Sandra herself. He probably perceived her to be the kind of young woman who, as a young woman, does not require watching; and as an artist, so many were the dancers Max had seen, so many the celebrities he had "produced" that one would have had to be more than human to stir him to any demonstrations now. He scarcely looked at Sandra, and never applauded, though it was credibly reported that he sometimes stimulated the applause "out in front" by mysterious agencies which he had at com-

mand. But why should he himself lend a hand to it? "She's making good, isn't she?" he would inquire; "well —!" His shrug completed the vindication. And: "Rosenberg audiences have confidence in me, because I've never handed 'em a lemon," was his favourite boast. Not one person in a hundred of those who crowded the Marionettes every night, or stood in line and reserved seats three weeks ahead, had ever heard the name of Levison, but that mattered naught; their very presence in the theatre confirmed him. As an agent in bringing genius before the world, he was content with a kind of vicarious renown, and well he might be, for he knew himself the autocrat of his queer kingdom. His power was much more real, undisputed, final than that of any actual monarch, and few there were who could swagger as reasonably.

His care of Sandra extended not only to the placing of her bank account with Messrs. Kahn, Loew and Company, but more or less to the management of all her affairs. Sandra, without having noticed how it came to pass, presently found herself the tenant of a choice little apartment in a choice section of town which she rented of a Mr. Isadore Bettmann; her stage-costumes were being made by Madame Lilli whose name in earlier days had been Sadie Rheinstrom, her physician was Dr. Joseph Marcus. They were all exceedingly efficient people. One never sees the Bettmanns, Rheinstroms and Marcuses of any community in menial positions, so that Sandra's servants were of other nationalities, the chauffeur, for instance, a coloured man, her maid a middle-aged and tight-lipped Scotchwoman, both of them of steely respectability. Mr. Levison had seen to that, too, busy man as he was. No detail in regard to her was too small for him. He even took it upon him to remind her per-

sistently that she must have a chaperon, or a female companion of some such quality as the term chaperon connotes.

"Abroad they call them *dames de compagnie*, and everybody — everybody like you, I mean — has one, the same way everybody has one of these fancy dogs that they pay all kinds of money for. Say, that's an idea, by the way! You ought to have a dog; why don't you have a dog? Funny thing I never thought of that before! I'll get you a dog — one of these — now — what d'you call 'em? A Pom — that's it! A Pom or a Peke! That's it! The floor-mop style. You have your picture taken with him. That's the stunt. You have your picture taken, and I'll get it into one of the society-magazines, the reading-from-left-to-right kind, you know, with one of those snappy little notices they always fix up to put underneath it. I'll attend to that right away." He got out his note-book and pencil, and made a memorandum; then returned to the first subject. "You ought to have a chaperon. It's the thing to do — for your kind, I mean. You're one of the ones that can do this — now — social stunt, see? Some can't because they — er — well, they can't," said Mr. Levison, reticently. "Your mother now? She's living? Seems as if I've heard you talk about her. Don't you want her? You'd have to pay anybody else a salary. I should think you'd like to have your mother."

"Mother?" said Sandra dubiously. A hundred objections, not one of which Levison could have understood, crowded into her mind at once. "Why, she — I don't believe she —"

"She wouldn't like it, hey?" said Levison; and reading or misreading her expression, he added quickly with

that feeling for old age which most nobly and beautifully characterizes his race: "You don't want to put it up to her? Well, that's right. When they get along in years, they oughtn't to be worried. Only you may be mistaken. I shouldn't wonder if the old lady would like it first-rate. Nothing to do but ride around with you in the machine, and boss the servants—they all love that—and have everybody tell her what a wonder her daughter is. I should think it would just suit her. But you know best."

Sandra did indeed know best; Levison's conception of the delights Mrs. Boardman might enjoy would have made her laugh but for its very simplicity. It would have been impossible to explain to him why her mother would be lost in such an existence as he pictured; Levison had never met her type of woman in his life. It somehow pained Sandra to think that he could not fail to be impressed by Mrs. Richard's fine, fading beauty, her taste, her manners, her distinction all of which he would deeply admire, whereas the Victorian *grande dame* herself would inevitably set him down as a common, commercial, in a word *impossible*. And not her mother alone, but everybody else at home. She tried to explain their attitude to herself by her customary argument; they did not know, they did not understand: but in the middle of the formula stopped short almost frightened by the discovery that it was her own attitude, not theirs, that needed explanation. They were the same, but who was she? What had become of the original Alexandra Boardman? Years of time, leagues of distance, seemed to separate her from that girl. Sandra picked up a photograph of the "Queen of Spades, the top-card in the pack"—a phrase which was bandied about town a good deal that season—and

studied it a long while and laid it down at last with a sigh, wondering if the change in her was really a deterioration as Everett had all but said outright in his letter.

The question of a companion she settled finally by getting Mary Schultze, of all people, to undertake that office. Levison, who was at first amazed and amused, and inclined to be skeptical as to Mary's qualifications, eventually acknowledged with increasing amazement and amusement that no better selection could have been made. "Why, that girl was just born to tag somebody around!" he declared. "Her being young makes no difference; she might be twenty-five or fifty or a thousand — it's all one! She isn't pretty, she isn't homely, she isn't anything. You don't think of her being around to play propriety; you don't think about her at all. She just seems to be necessary and natural, like a shadow. She makes the best effect I ever saw. It's — it's —" Mr. Levison had to resort to his gesticulations to express himself. "My God!" said he. "It's *atmosphere*, that's what she is! *Atmosphere*!"

Mary, for her part, had required considerable persuading, and left her position in the law-office with hesitation and misgivings. She was not so much timid as cautious, feeling that a good, steady job as hum-drum as it may be, should not be relinquished for the uncertainties of life with a stage-favourite, no matter how glittering and easy and well-paid. Nobody could tell how long it would last. All very fine just now, but suppose Miss Boardman got out of health, or had an accident so that she couldn't dance any more, or lost her hold on popular regard, or married and retired? Then where would Mary be? All very fine too, to say that she had her stenography to fall back on, but after you have been out of it for a while, you get out of touch with people; they forget you; and anyhow

stenographers' situations are never easy to get in New York with dozens of girls after every one of them. On the other hand, no mortal young woman, not even Mary, could have been indifferent to the allurements of the prospect. She would be where nine-tenths of the girls she knew — and hundreds of others, for that matter — would give their eyebrows to be, "on the inside." She would know all about that subject of perennial and eating curiosity, the private life of a public personage. She was certain to meet or at least to see intimately all sorts of famous people, and to travel to all parts of the world; already Mr. Levison was talking about taking Miss Boardman to Europe, and requests to perform before small, chosen audiences in the most distinguished houses — for fabulous sums, of course — were said to rain upon her as upon the more notable actors and opera-singers. To Gus's objection that a companion was in a very ill-defined and uncomfortable position between the upper mill-stone of her employer and the nether one of the domestics (these were not the young man's words, but their substance) Mary retorted spiritedly that as far as that went, what was she in Messrs. Hogue and Sterrett's office? Just a clerk. Would Mrs. Hogue or Mrs. Sterrett think of inviting her to their houses? They never had, anyhow. She was just about the same to them as a nursemaid. Miss Boardman knew that she was a lady, called her Mary and insisted on being called Sandra, and was as sweet and unaffected as if she were nobody at all, or still studying dancing in Aunt Lou's hall-bedroom. That discussion clinched the business! Mary packed up her few belongings, took her last pay-envelope, and said good-bye to the office; her destination having been noised abroad, the departure occasioned uncommon excitement, even the heads of the firm betraying some

interest, and Mr. Sterrett going so far as a jocosé suggestion that she "chalk his hat" to a performance at the Marionettes some night.

"You can tell her — you say her real name's Boardman? Funny! I thought she was a Russian or some kind of foreigner — you tell her I've done my best to boost her. I've been to see her dance and taken my wife. At two dollars and a half per it runs into money, but I like to help a struggling young thing like her, and I see by the paper she only gets about twenty-five hundred a week," said he with facetious solemnity. "Orchestra-chairs about twelve rows back are where I like to sit, but a row either way will do. I'm the easiest man on earth to satisfy."

"I can speak to Mr. Levison about it," said Mary, deliberately literal. Mr. Sterrett had always been kind enough whenever he noticed her at all; but at the moment he somehow personified the fate that had heretofore condemned her to unimportance, and Mary could not resist taking that thrust at it.

She entertained vague purposes of keeping a diary, and years afterwards writing it over into such a book as she sometimes saw advertised, or in the shop-windows. The title might be "*Glimpses of a Great Artist*," or "*Behind the Scenes with Sandra*," or "*My Life with a Celebrated Dancer*." There was a great deal of money in books like that, Mary had heard; cultured persons bought them, and they were talked about in all the refined circles. Unfortunately being *Behind the Scenes with Sandra*, and *Mary's Life with a Celebrated Dancer* turned out, take it by and large, as monotonous and uneventful as can well be imagined! The diary project fell through from sheer lack of material. Nothing exciting happened; nothing whatever was allowed to happen, if possible to prevent it,

that might disturb the ordered and narrow routine of Sandra's days. Physical health, it appeared, was the prime requisite; she must have such and such food prepared thus and thus; so much time was parcelled out to sleep, to practise, to exercise, to rest, to recreation. An equal duty was the care of her looks; she must not lose in weight, she must not gain in weight; a wrinkle, a troublesome tooth, a grey hair would be the very climax and vanishing-point of tragedy. Sandra took it all most seriously; she had always taken everything that pertained to her dancing seriously; and indeed she had good reason to nowadays, Mary thought simply, as soon as she got over her first surprise. Twenty-five hundred a week was serious enough, in all conscience.

Perhaps it was not that much, perhaps it was more, but no one was likely to find out from Mary. The young woman was naturally discreet, and her years in an office had developed a certain "business-sense," as Levison pronounced it. She relieved him, as time went on and he found her to be essentially reliable, of many of the cares incident to keeping the public away from his star. She escorted Sandra to and fro, interviewed the interviewers, made the appointments, read the letters. She was invaluable. That Levison grew to have entire confidence in her is evidenced by the fact that one day he waylaid her in private and with an embarrassment which sat oddly on him asked her what was done about — now — the soft-heads and the — er — the fellows with the coin, you know, that wrote notes and — er — all that?

"You know what I mean — any girl that's been born and brought up in this town!" he said with a meaning look. "Of course I — I can't say anything to her about it. That's what you're here for, anyhow, to look after that end."

Mary told him circumstantially what was done with all the letters. There were a great many appeals for charity from people both in and out of the profession, which Sandra almost always responded to generously — too generously by far, and too indiscriminately, Mary thought; as many more came from stage-struck young girls and unrecognized geniuses who wanted her to get or give them an audience; and when it came to the promoters, stock-brokers, automobile-dealers, real-estate agents, purveyors of candy, champagne, furs, diamonds and so on, their name was legion. Sandra "turned down" most of them; she was not without some business-sense too, it would seem —

"Yeah, I know, I know," Levison interrupted impatiently. "But the others — the chappies —?"

"I was coming to those," said Mary, with tranquillity. "I read all of their letters, only I've got so I just skip through. They always say about the same thing. We used to read them together and nearly kill ourselves laughing, but Sandra won't bother with them now —"

"Oh, she won't hey?" said Levison, distinctly relieved. "I thought women never got tired of the heart-stuff. I thought you couldn't pull it too strong for 'em. I didn't know but what she might — now — fall for it sometimes. What do you do about 'em, though?"

"Why, throw 'em away or burn 'em up — she doesn't care. Of course, there're flowers and candy. I thought it would be nice to give them around to the chorus, but I tried it once, and do you know, Mr. Levison, those girls got just as mad! I found out they got quantities themselves. They asked me if I thought I was visiting the Old Ladies' Home, and things like that," said Mary, smiling a little herself as Levison roared out laughing. "Well, I didn't know any better. I hadn't any idea they'd be so insulted. Now I give them to that old

carpenter that's been here so long. You know? The one that limps? I think his name is Grant. And then I give some to 'Sunny Jim' and to Mr. Potter, and — oh, around to everybody. Then the people that are all the time sending and asking if they can't install some new kind of electric piano-player or decorate her boudoir, or demonstrate something, or give her a course of treatments, massage or something, you know, without being paid for it, just for the advertisement — sometimes even, they offer to pay *her*, if she'll recommend them — why, we just turn them down, too. Goodness, if Sandra tried them all, she wouldn't have time for anything else!" Mary said. And here, whether she felt Mr. Levison's attention to be flagging and desired to attract it again, or whether the fact occurred to her as casually as she mentioned it, she added: "I didn't know what to do about the jewellery that time, but Sandra —"

"Hey? Jewellery?" said Levison, aroused at once and scowling. "You mean some fellow she knew sent it?"

"Oh, no — no, it wasn't anybody she knew. She'd never even seen him. He wrote and said he was crazy about her, and if she'd wear it that night he'd be in Box A, and he'd know she'd meet him after the performance. *Imagine!* It was a perfectly lovely chain and pendant, a *sautoir*, you know — awfully stylish — it came from Tiffany's. The pendant was purple enamel with a kind of star of pearls and diamonds in the middle, and then there were little kind of knobs of pearls and diamonds and amethysts every few inches along the chain — it was a platinum chain — oh, it was simply gorgeous!" said Mary, warming to the recital. "We did try it on, both of us," she confessed and laughed shamefacedly; "before Sandra sent it back."

"Sent it back? Wasn't it real?" said Levison.

"I don't know. I guess so, though. It looked real. She wouldn't hear of keeping it, let alone wear it that night —"

Levison grunted.

"He was in Box A sure enough. That is, there was a man in that box, in a dress-suit —"

"Ump! What'd he look like? Young?"

"Why, no — sort of middling. Sandra had one of the ushers take the box around to him —"

"Didn't she write anything in it?" Levison interposed suspiciously.

"No. She just wrapped it up in the same paper it came in, and sent it out to him. And he just took it and went away. He didn't even stay to see her dance."

Levison grunted again. "Had a nerve, didn't he?" said he in accents highly uncomplimentary to the unknown. And then inconsistently: "Poor devil!" He thought a moment, then asked another question: "Was that all? She hasn't heard any more of him?"

"No."

After further frowning meditation, Levison said: "Well, if any of 'em get too rank, just let me know," and was moving away, when some second thought halted him. "You understand, Miss Schultze, I — er — I've got to keep a line — well — there's a lot of marrying in the stage business — too much! I've seen plenty of good performers spoiled by it — or set back anyway. That's what's on my mind," he said, as if feeling that so much curiosity needed some explanation; there was a species of uneasy challenge in his eye.

Mary nodded readily with an open countenance, thereby displaying the astonishing powers of duplicity possessed by even the most guileless of women. Miss Schultze

was transparently honest and not too clever; nevertheless at that moment, whatever he chose to say or even if he had kept silence, she guessed accurately what was on Mr. Levison's mind!

If this incident and others slight in themselves but straws which showed which way the wind blew increased Mary's new and pleasing feeling of importance she was not the person to presume on it. The great gratification to be derived from possessing certain sorts of information is simply the possession, the keeping your knowledge to yourself. It was none of her business, Mary argued cannily, to tell Sandra about Mr. Levison; pretty soon everybody would be telling her, anyhow, or he would betray himself. And, by a similar line of reasoning, why reveal to Levison the existence of Mr. Thatcher? So her catalogue of letter-writers did not include the latter gentleman who, nevertheless, was the most persistent of them all. "Only his aren't like love letters. They're just nice letters," Mary said to herself with some disappointment. Such faithfulness and devotion as Sam's ought to have been romantic; but romance and sandy hair, a hundred-and-seventy pounds weight, a very solid bank account, and — shall it be hinted? — some sense of humour, cannot be associated together. Sam himself would have made fun of the notion.

For all that he occasionally performed some high-flown feat about which there was a flavour of romance — romance strictly *à la* twentieth century — such, for instance, as cabling from Madrid where he happened to be on the night of Sandra's débüt, a long and monstrously expensive message of congratulation, jokes and nonsense intermingled. He did not know whether the event was a success or not, until two weeks later when he picked up a *Times* at his Brussels hotel; whereupon Samuel

rushed out and sent another cable equally boyish and exuberant, and also costly. His progress to Vienna, Budapesth, Rome, Cairo, half around the world was indicated by more cablegrams, some of them addressed to a Fifth Avenue florist in terms inviting bankruptcy. Thus does the knight of today exhibit his chivalry; and on the whole few ways have been discovered that are more convincing.

Sam himself reached New York City on the heels of his last communication, a wireless sent from mid-ocean. He would have gone tearing up from the docks to Sandra's apartment, but the common-sense which achieves kindness restrained him. "I expect she has to be let alone in the daytime so she can rest and take care of herself," he thought, influenced as usual by the deceptive fragility of her appearance; and a little perhaps by previous experiences with stars of Sandra's degree. It was strange to think of her amongst them. He went to the office and lunched with his chief, and craftily introducing her name, heard her spoken of as a Cuban young woman (educated in a convent from which she had escaped and made her way to New York to avoid marriage with some half-negro sugar-planter whose estates adjoined!) with much private amusement; and after luncheon walked two or three squares out of his way around by the Theatre of the Marionettes. He spelled out "Little Bo-Peep" from the unlit electric-sign over the entrance, and below it "Sandra" in letters only a fraction smaller. Levison's chic and daring posters flaunted on either hand; the vestibule was lined with photographs of her in forty different poses, as the "Peacock-Girl"; as the "Queen of Spades"; as "Pierrette" in company with a chalked and be-ruffled young man for whom Mr. Thatcher instantly conceived a strong dislike; and in a new dance just added to the evening's entertainment, the "Falling Leaf."

They were good pictures; the lightness of her movement survived even in the camera, and it was Sandra's own face, so potently expressive, that looked from among the scarfs, plumes, embroideries, bedizenments. Sam caught himself thinking not only of old dancing-school days and Mr. Matson's "Exhibitions," which was natural enough, but of the faces of other Boardmans, on those handsome old canvases which he recalled hanging on the walls of Sandra's home. If it seemed strange to him, what would *they* have thought of it?

CHAPTER VIII

WHEN Sam finally reached his lady's presence, it was with a relief of which he was ashamed that he found her unchanged. He had not seen her for nearly a year, not since long before she wrote him the great news of the Rosenberg engagement; and Sam, with sundry figures of stage women he had known forcing themselves upon his reluctant memory, realized that in spite of himself he had feared some difference in her. But it was the same Sandra in a little grey dress that recalled one he had used to admire, sitting — with that same air of thistledown weightlessness — among cushions on the lounge while she talked to him eagerly just as on a night which he remembered with rueful distinctness some three or four years ago. To be sure, the lounge was no such shabbily cozy affair as their old friend of the Boardman parlour. Mr. Sigmond Morhardt of the firm of Morhardt, Inc., Decorators, would have veiled his eyes in horror before that Victorian relic. Sandra's little reception-room was as stunningly stylish as the apartments Mr. Morhardt created for the stage, which indeed it strongly resembled. There were pale panelled walls, attenuated chairs, consoles with chaste marble tops, mirrors cut up into panes like windows, drifts of shadowy gauze draperies, embankments of satin, lace and chiffon pillows shading imperceptibly through all the colours of the spectrum to dead black. It was a triumph; no greater proof is needed than the fact that it had been photographed five several times from every angle for the Sunday supplements, the leading women's magazines, and the most no-

table of those periodicals which Mr. Levison not inaccurately described as "the reading-from-left-to-right kind."

"You have to let them do that sort of thing, you know," Sandra said with a complete indifference. "It's part of the work."

"You don't have much privacy, I suppose," said Sam sympathetically.

She looked at him a little surprised. "Why yes, all the privacy I want. For instance, you didn't find it so easy to get at me, now did you?"

Sam had to own with a laugh that he did not. "Miss Schultze was as wary as a cat. But when she finally made out who it was at the telephone she begged my pardon two or three times and seemed to be a good deal upset though I kept telling her I understood how it was. You'd be hounded to death —"

"Oh, no, it's not so bad as you think. Of course they'd worry me; but the funny thing is if nobody took any notice of me in that way, at all, I'd be ever so much more worried! The wardrobe-woman at the Marionettes used to be quite well-known on the stage — she was leading-lady with McCullough, and talks a lot about those way-back ones, Maggy Mitchell, you know, and all those real old-timers — and she asked me once how many letters I got in the morning's mail? 'Why, goodness, I haven't any idea!' I said. 'I've never counted them.' It's true, too. I'd never have thought of counting them. But what do you think? She gave me a funny kind of look, and said: 'When you begin to count 'em, dearie, you'll know you're *done*!' It frightened me, somehow —"

"Oh, stuff, Sandra! She talked that way just because she's a — a croaking old *has-been* herself!" Sam declared hotly. "She probably never amounted to much anyhow. Not like *you*!"

"Do you really think I'm — I'm pretty good, Sam?" asked the girl with far more anxiety than she had ever betrayed after any of the thousand-and-one amateur entertainments in which he had seen her; yet for technical finish, for power and originality those performances could not compare with what she was capable of nowadays!

"Sandra, it's beautiful! I've never seen anything that could touch it!"

"I'm always afraid you feel that way because you know me. It's not fair to corner people and ask them flat out, anyhow. They can't tell me what they honestly think. But that's another queer thing. I know when I'm *good*! I know it better than anybody else. But I can't help asking people all the time! It's silly, but I don't seem to be able to stop myself."

"Well, maybe I'm prejudiced in your favour, and then again maybe I only want to be polite because I'm cornered. But they're turning 'em away at the box-office. I only happened to get a seat because some man came in and gave his up at the last minute. That shows that the general public thinks you're the worst ever, of course. And those recalls the other night. No use talking, it was a frost!" said Sam, guessing correctly that this bit of genial irony would be more reassuring than any amount of enthusiastic protest; it sounded so sane and practical. He had heard and seen a good deal, professionally, of people in Sandra's position, and their vanity and touchiness, their dependence on applause and their distrust of it, had always struck him as being more pathetic than ridiculous or irritating. Consider the lives they led: what self-control and self-forgetfulness, what concentration, what tremendous expenditure of nervous force a single performance demanded! They were so long in arriving, and they had so short a time, ten years, twenty years at most; and what cruel oblivion

awaited them! Fear of it, fear of waning powers stalked them even in their prime, as it was stalking Sandra at this very moment. She sat, her black eyes gazing wistfully, her fingers twining in and out of the tassel at the corner of one of Mr. Morhardt's opulent cushions, one foot swinging — a familiar attitude and movement; and watching her, Sam felt the old familiar delighted surprise that anything so uncalculated could be so charming. He checked a sigh.

"Well, Sandra, you got there," he said.

"Yes," said Sandra. There was no complacency in her tone. Sam, who himself had also "got there" so far as that locution implies success in a career was in a sense prepared for her next words. "It hasn't been all my doing, though. I've had luck. Of course I've worked. And I know I've got it in me. That part isn't luck. But —" She made a little expressive gesture, smiling. "I hadn't any sense when I started out. I thought I was going to go to the top at one jump, right off! And I thought that once I got to the top, I wouldn't have another thing to do simply sit back and be — be *It*, you know. Well now, here I am — and I work harder than ever, and think about it a great deal more! It isn't grand and easy and all plain sailing at all — anything but!"

Sam nodded, "But you like it?"

"Oh, *yes*! I'd rather do it than anything on earth — I always have felt that way, though. Only now I seem to feel so much more responsible. It's because I have a name and reputation, something to be responsible for, I suppose. I'm afraid all the time that I'm not doing my best — I'm afraid of being satisfied. You can't afford to be satisfied — you must keep on — on — *on*!" Sandra said with violence, her face harrowed momentarily by some feeling higher than ambition. Sam thought again: What lives they lead!

"Well, don't wear yourself out," he said; and something inadequate in this rejoinder to Sandra's tragic outburst made them both laugh.

"That sounded like Mother," the girl said.

"What do the family think?"

"Oh, they — they are pleased, I believe. You know how they are. I suppose they would have preferred me to make a success at something else. But they — they like it well enough," said Sandra with constraint, worrying the tassel. "They haven't said much — all but Everett, that is. Everett has been outspoken about not liking it."

"What's his objection?"

"Well, he objects to it all. He thinks it will — well, vulgarize me — make me *common*, you know."

Sam felt — indeed, he actually looked for a second — as if every red hair on his head were about to blaze up. Hitherto Everett had seemed to him negligible — a good enough sort of fellow — all right probably, only not of much force — perhaps he had never had a real opportunity to show what was in him. Now, however, Sam's indifference was suddenly transmuted to angry contempt. He forgot that he himself not such a great while before had been troubled by doubt as to what Sandra's life and environment might have done to her! He was righteously indignant. One must make allowances for the elder Boardmans, he thought; they had different ideas which they could not be expected to overcome in a hurry. But Everett — ! He of all people, was in no position to criticize; he ought to be proud of being Sandra's brother; he ought to be encouraging her with might and main, instead of making her unhappy in a way displaying a species of petty dexterity that was in itself unworthy — unmanly. But when Samuel spoke, it was with moderation.

"I don't know why Everett should feel anxious. There

are dancers, of course — But there isn't any art or calling on earth that can't be made vulgar. It's a matter of the individual. Nobody that knows you — ”

“ You don't understand. Everett doesn't mean that, exactly,” Sandra interrupted him. “ He knows I won't do anything the family would be ashamed of. He only thinks I'll get to thinking too much about money and applause and publicity and — and all that. It *does* coarsen one; I'm a little afraid of it myself. Of course Everett doesn't like the — the surroundings — he has the ideas that most people have about the stage — he doesn't realize that I am very isolated, and that my life is all given up to one thing; he can't take it in that what I do is *work*; it doesn't look like work to him. Why, I used to think that way myself! Don't you know, I was just telling you? But it's the money part of it that he hates the worst.”

She spoke so earnestly and simply that Sam Thatcher was fairly silenced. It came into his mind that Everett might actually be just such a quixotic fool as Sandra unconsciously described; but Sam shook his head mentally over that notion. There was evidence in plenty that the Boardman fortunes which had been visibly declining were now on the road to a complete reinstatement. Whose doing was it? Not Mr. Boardman's, certainly; the poor old gentleman did what he could, but there wasn't much work left in him, Sam thought compassionately. And not Everett's. Everett was probably getting at the outside about eighty dollars a month, and spending every cent of it on himself. Sandra must be the one; she was the mainstay of the family, just as she had dreamed of being; and in that case, Everett — who hated money! — must profit indirectly, or even directly.

“ Mr. Levison says people like me ought not to have any family,” said Sandra, with a half smile.

"He said something!" said Samuel, dryly.

Mr. Thatcher and Mr. Levison had met; they kept on meeting, naturally, and in fact discovered a number of mutual acquaintances besides Sandra, Sam's affairs frequently bringing him into contact with the theatrical folk amongst whom Levison lived, moved and had his being. If the two men did not seek each other's society very earnestly, it is to be remembered that each was a busy person, whose friendships were already formed, so that, after the manner of New York they had no time for anything or anybody extra. But Mary Schultze found this explanation unconvincing; according to her, their lack of interest was too studied.

"They *know*, both of 'em! Each one knows by the way the other looks at her. They pretend not to, of course; they try to look as if they didn't see anything, and didn't care anyhow, but they're both on pins and needles the whole time," she told Gus.

In spite of their having differed seriously over Mary's present job at the time she undertook it, neither of these practical minded lovers had wavered from allegiance to the other. The glittering masculine personalities of the "Bo-Peep" company had no attractions for Mary nor she for them. As a matter of fact, they were mostly respectable married men with children whom they were anxious to bring up and educate for other careers than the stage; and a nice little farm somewhere, not too far from Broadway, with chickens and a Ford and a house supplied with modern conveniences, summed up their ambitions in almost every case. They had snap-shots of the baby — hugging the fox-terrier and squinting at the sun — inside their watch-cases, innocent uninteresting treasures which they would show you with the utmost pride and affection; and then go out to the footlights and sing one of the risky

songs or utter the not-too-witty ambiguities that seasoned the piece with the clearest conscience in the world! After her first curiosity wore off, Mary accepted them as she had accepted the men clerks in Messrs. Hogue and Sterrett's office; they did not seem one whit more picturesque. As for Augustus, though he was as impervious as Mary to the lure of the theatre — which is a phrase he would have admired but hesitated to use — he presently began to relish the association. It made him an object of envy to the whole of McChesney's; not every day did you come across some one who knew "Sandra" personally, whose "girl" was her companion, who had seen her rehearse in private and could speak authoritatively of what they were going to put on next at the Marionettes, who went in and out by the stage-door, and behind the scenes habitually, had a nodding acquaintance with the stars and had even gone errands for some of them, and was called by his last name by "Sandra's" manager — Beckley, just like that! Gus, like Mary, enjoyed his importance, even while he had a fair idea of its worth or worthlessness. Every celebrity or half-way celebrity whose name was carried on the Marionettes' program trailed a variegated collection of camp-followers, so that Augustus' position was nowise unique; but he held these others in secret contempt. In his opinion they were mere hangers-on, good for nothing else, whereas he felt that he frequented the place as might any rich young man-about-town or literary fellow in search of material; it entertained him and appeased a mild spirit of adventure.

"Do you think *she* knows?" he asked.

"About Mr. Thatcher? Goodness, yes! He's asked her over and over again; it's been going on for ever so long. Don't you remember I used to tell you about it when he came to see her that first time at Aunt Lou's? I

should think she'd know about the other one, too, by this time — I don't see how she can help it. But she's never said anything. She wouldn't anyhow, I don't believe. But honestly I wouldn't be surprised if she'd never noticed! She's so wrapped up in that dancing, she doesn't think about another thing!"

"Well, of course, she's a great dancer," said Gus, with the detachment of a connoisseur. "She has a right to be at the top. All the same, she'd have been a long while getting there, if it hadn't been for him. This town's full of good dancers; there's lots of luck about it. If he'd taken a fancy to some other girl, bet you by this time he'd have had her up just as high, and everybody running to see her, and making money by the truck-load just the same as this one."

"Oh, I don't know about that, Gus, I wouldn't say that," said Mary, disturbed. "Mr. Levison can't do it *all*. He couldn't have pushed her if she hadn't made good. Of course she owes him a lot, but she knows it. That's where she's different from some of them, I guess. I'm sometimes kind of afraid she *might* —" Mary paused significantly. "Just on account of being grateful to him —" she finished no less significantly.

"Well, say she did, it's a lot your affair, isn't it?" said Augustus ironically. "I don't know what you're afraid about."

"Oh, I can't help it. He's a Jew, for one thing."

"Well!"

"Why, Gus Beckley, you know perfectly well — ! You're just talking that way to be contrary," said Mary, without much severity, however.

"No, I'm not," Gus insisted. "He isn't nearly as Jew-y as most of them. And you know — these stage-people — it seems as if it didn't make much difference about

them. You don't care much what they are, somehow."

"You would if it came to marrying them yourself, though," said Miss Schultze with force.

"Maybe I would." And here another question occurred to Mr. Beckley which he propounded with the gravity it deserved. "Say, Mary, suppose he did ask her, and suppose she turned him down. What's next, hey? D'you suppose all this keeps up?" His glance and gesture comprehended not only the apartment but a host of things unseen appertaining to Sandra herself, to Levison, to the Marionettes, even to the outside world. The suggestion was sufficiently vague, but Mary caught it.

"Gracious, I don't know! I never thought of *that*!" she ejaculated.

After a thoughtful silence, Gus said, wrinkling his eyes sagely: "Well, you couldn't blame him if he laid down on it. After all he's done — ! It would be too much like working for nothing and getting nothing for it; and no white man's going to keep that up, let alone a Jew! Well, of course, I don't literally mean he isn't white; I just mean they're not the same as ourselves."

"*There!* You *see!* You feel just like everybody else, you know you do!" said Mary triumphantly.

Of the gossip that milled thus around her, Sandra was quite unconscious. Notwithstanding a succession of experiences during the last few years which had insensibly shifted her outlook, perhaps even worked some subtle change in her character, she still measured people more or less by the Boardman rule. In Mary's position, Sandra would have felt it a kind of disloyalty to discuss her employer so freely. Likewise she never suspected that in the cramped little world of the theatre there were people who were jealous of her, who sneered at her success, and who were not above trying to impair her performance in

small ways known to the profession. Sandra herself was jealous of nobody; why, she would have argued naïvely, should anybody be jealous of her? As for the other meanesses, being incapable of them, she could scarcely understand when Levison warned her against them. He mentioned a certain Miss Vera Lloyd, of whom Sandra had never taken much notice, classing her with the other handsome, showy young women with whom the piece was plentifully supplied. Two or three years ago, she would have laughed and wondered at their manners, their voices, their taste in dress, and would have written home letters filled with not very sympathetic comment. But nowadays either she was less observant or less critical, or the whole matter seemed of less importance.

"You don't mean to say you haven't got onto her? Why, say, listen, that girl would crab the whole act, if she could. She couldn't have meant it? Nobody'd do a thing like that?" he echoed Sandra's objection. "Maybe not! Maybe not!"

"But I don't see —"

"You don't!" said Levison epigrammatically. He looked down at her odd transparently pale face which just now wore a puzzled and distressed expression that made it seem touchingly youthful, even childish. "You ought to have a guardian appointed. I'd like to know what you're going to do when I'm not here."

"When you're not here? Mr. Levison! You're not going away?" Sandra asked in an alarm which should have been comical. But Levison did not smile. He moved nervously, checked himself, and stood eyeing her sidelong, fidgeting with his watch-chain, which, by the way, was a massive and expensive creation with a Masonic-looking charm or insignia of some sort dangling down from it, twinkling with diamonds. Sandra thought the thing in

atrocious taste, and often wished there were some tactful way of suggesting to him not to wear it.

"Why, I expect I'll have to go some of these days. Got to get over to the other side once in every so often — to look 'em over, you know," he said. "Why? Think you'll miss me?"

"Awfully! I'll feel lost. I — I've gotten to relying on you so. And no wonder! Look at all you've done!" said the girl, with an honest and open warmth which should have effectively banished, destroyed, knocked on the head any sentimental hopes. There was something equally deadly in the practical character of her next words. "I wouldn't know who to go to to tell me what to do. I'm so used to you. Who would you want me to go to in case you shouldn't be here? You know? About contracts and all that legal part? I don't know anything."

Levison abandoned the watch-chain. "Don't go to anybody," he said gruffly. "I'm your manager. If anything comes up, let it wait till I get back, or cable me."

"All right. I'm glad I asked you, and I'm glad you don't want to turn me over to somebody else. I'd be afraid of him. Even if he meant well and was very efficient and all that, it wouldn't be *you*. He wouldn't have your judgment, nor have seen so much probably. You've been at it so long —"

"Oh, Pop knows everything!" said Levison in a scoffing tone. "Say, how old do you think I am? Thirty-seven! That's some age, isn't it? Methuselah hasn't got anything on *me*, hey?"

The strange thing is that if Sandra had been the Alexandra Boardman of other days, she would long ere this have divined Mr. Levison's state of mind; the girls of her class were not more keenly on the lookout for suitors than any other girls, nor did they set too high a value on any

man's attentions, being in the main sensible; but any one of them, including Sandra herself would have been very much alive to the fact that some man was in love with her. Nowadays everything of the sort seemed to Sandra to belong to that previous existence that was so featureless, so little worth while; she had no time to think about love or marriage. When her mother wrote her about So-and-so's engagement, and Such-a-one's "darling baby," she had to make an effort to feel interested. In entering the world of art, she had somehow cut off nearly all communication with the other worlds; she would complain of her isolation and yet was at heart glad to be isolated. How else, Sandra thought seriously, could she do her work?

She had a vague idea that all this was profoundly selfish, and salved her conscience by various generosityes to the family; yet when they thanked her — always excepting Everett who continued to hold aloof — Sandra shrank painfully. It seemed to be all wrong, a reversal of the natural order for her father and mother to be thanking her. She was facing, without knowing it, the fact that between individuals there is no wholly kind way of giving, and no gift that does not entail a certain humiliation; and it bewildered her to find that she was not happy in doing something from which she had expected the greatest happiness. She could not be, at one and the same time, Sandra the dancer, and Sandra the daughter in her father's house; the discovery troubled her, but she did not want to resume her old place. When they spoke affectionately of her coming and resting at home, during her vacation, Sandra was startled and ashamed to find that she did not want to resume it even for that brief period; she had actually been planning for a nook of her own in the country somewhere not too far from Broadway, exactly like all the rest of the Marionettes' crew!

A Mr. Simeon Sturm whom Levison introduced to her, knew just the thing she would like, as it transpired, and volunteered to take her out to look at it in his automobile one Sunday afternoon. So Sandra and Mary and Levison went; and the poodle with which Levison had provided her went; and a photographer whom it is quite possible Levison had provided too, took pictures of the party, getting out of their machine, eating luncheon at the tea-house, lounging among elaborately rustic settings, putting the dog through his tricks, and so on, all against the enchanting background of the Catskills. Sandra was a good deal taken with the farm which was a farm *de luxe*, with a delightful twenty-room "cottage" of English architecture snuggled cozily among trees, terraces, and gardens formal, Japanese, Puritan, any style. Buildings of a like homely elegance housed the machinery of utilities; it was perfect, at a towering price, which, however, Mr. Sturm intimated might be subject to revision — "shaded a little" was what he really said. They reached the city again late, Sandra still undecided.

After dinner, as she and Mary were sitting in the grey salon, the bell rang and Mary got up, saying: "There's Gus, I expect," and went to open the door herself. But instead of Gus there stood on the threshold a tall young man who might, she thought, have been the original of those fine, superlatively good-looking yet withal manly young fellows whom Mr. Charles Dana Gibson sets forth with so felicitous a pencil. Mary gazed at him in a flutter of admiration. She did not hear the question he asked — in a voice as satisfying as his appearance — but Sandra did, and rushed to the door in a great excitement.

"Everett!" she cried out; and with a sob as he put out his arms to her: "Oh, Ev!"

CHAPTER IX

SANDRA'S delight at seeing her brother was only equalled by Everett's own astonishment and concern when he finally made out from her broken, distressful explanations that all this while she had supposed him to be angry with her, or worse, disappointed, even disgusted.

"Why, good gracious, Sandra, I had no idea — ! Of course I didn't particularly like it at first — none of us did, you knew that all along. I didn't want to stand in your way, but at the same time I didn't want to take the responsibility of encouraging you. The whole thing seemed so — so *radical* somehow, so different from anything *we've* ever done," he said earnestly. "It sort of hurt me to think of your doing it, at first. I couldn't get over it — my sister dancing for money; for anybody and everybody to go and stare at, that had the price of a ticket. You know we weren't brought up to think of that as something a girl like you *could* do. Of course, times have changed like everything. I can see now that that old idea was all rot; and Dad and Mother weren't to blame for cramming us full of it. They believed it themselves devoutly. But I didn't mean for you ever to suspect — well, I suppose I must have showed how I felt at the beginning, without knowing it. I must have written something, though I can't remember, I can't imagine what it could have been. What *you've* done yourself has been to go to work and exaggerate it and brood over it, and make yourself wretched. Why, I wish I'd never said a word one way or the other! If I'd dreamed how seriously you

were going to take it — !” His fine face was full of trouble, affection and perplexity.

“Well, you know, Ev, you only wrote that one time,” said Sandra, a little perplexed herself in the midst of her happiness and relief. “And I — I thought — ”

“Yes, I’m not very good at writing. In fact, I’m shamefully careless. I leave letters unanswered until the statute of limitations lets me out,” said Everett, grimacing comically; “Don’t rub it in, San!”

But indeed Sandra had no idea of rubbing it in; she was only too glad to have him there with her, and to know that the coldness of the past year had been nothing but her own unhappy mistake. She took the blame with eagerness, upbraiding herself for not having known better. Everett was as much interested in and as proud of her as the others; was he not her only brother, and had he not always been as fond of her and as good to her as any brother could be? She recalled with increased pity girls whom she had known who were nothing like so fortunate in their brothers; setting apart the fact that Everett had the advantage of them in brains and character, there was no comparison as far as mere presence went.

And mere presence goes a good way! We may talk as wisely as we please about appearances being deceitful, we may quote doughty old warnings to the effect that handsome is that handsome does and beauty is but skin-deep all day long, there is not one of us but recognizes the value of a pleasing outside; and I, for one, would hate to be offered the choice between introducing to Society an empty-headed Adonis, and a disfigured hunchback with the wits of Solomon! Everett was not an Adonis; he escaped being too good-looking. And neither was he empty-headed; on the contrary he had plenty of sense and humour; it was no wonder Sandra took a simple pleasure

in going about with and showing off as her brother a young man so eminently presentable. To be sure she had not much time for this diversion; but Everett with that considerate tact in which they had both been drilled, would not for a moment allow her mind to be burdened or distracted by the thought of him and his entertainment.

"Now look here, San, you must go on just as if I were not here," he said with a pleasant authority. "Don't bother your head about me. Of course I want to know all about the theatre and the way you live and everything. It would all be curious and interesting, even if you weren't my sister. But I'll just prowl around on my own, and stop, look and listen whenever I feel like it. I'll find out a lot more that way, and besides it somehow seems as if it wouldn't look well for you to have a brother hanging around," said the young fellow; he made a face of humorous distaste. "You're 'Sandra' you know — you're *somebody* — and a string of relatives — I don't know what makes the idea so ridiculous, but it is ridiculous. People would be wanting to know if I was Mr. George W. Sandra and all that sort of thing!"

They both laughed, Sandra with a certain inarticulate satisfaction; Everett's feeling, she thought, became him so well. He was not going to be classed with the shoddy pack of satellites that tagged about the theatre, and intermittently besought influence — her's, Mary's, anybody's — with Levison to get a job. None of that for Everett Boardman!

"I can't help introducing you to some of them, though — to Mr. Levison anyhow. You'll *have* to know *him*. And the rest — really, Ev, I want to do it, just to see their faces!" she told him with a pride that shyly took cover in the guise of fun. "They have never met or dreamed of anybody like you. Wait till you see the chorus-men!

I don't know any of them, but you probably will, if you stay long enough."

"Oh, I can stay as long as I please," said Everett easily. "I've given up at Arnold's." Her startled face amused him. "What's the matter? Didn't you feel the earth wobble a little the other day? That's when I walked out of the office."

"Why, I don't know — I somehow took it for granted that you would stay with Mr. Arnold the rest of your life — like Dad, you know. He's always stuck to the one thing," said Sandra. "What are you going to do?"

Time was when she would have shrunk from so frank a comment, and from the direct question; but so far had Sandra travelled from the Boardman paths that she was not even reminded of them by the raised eyebrows and the face of withheld disapproval which Everett turned upon her. "What are you going to do, Ev?" she repeated.

"Why, how business-like you've gotten to be!" her brother ejaculated. "I don't know what I'm going to do — as yet." Perhaps the last two words were a concession to some force in Sandra which he could not evade; they came out almost against his will. Otherwise Everett had employed the tone of amiable tolerance touched with amusement, with which he would have snubbed any other over-inquisitive person; and time was too when Sandra would have recognized that tone at once. But now she looked at him, wrinkling her forehead slightly, not at all snubbed.

"'As yet'?" she said after him. "Do you mean you have something in view? You're going with somebody else?"

"No," said Everett, preserving his negligent air. "Is this a catechism, San?"

Even that hint fell without reaching her, like a spent

arrow. "Oh, you're looking around still," Sandra said, practically as before. "Well, New York is a good place — only it's pretty big —" she shook her head wisely. It was on her tongue to ask him what he could do — what kind of office-work? She had never known exactly what his position with Mr. Arnold was, except that it had remained the same all these five years or so, and now guessed that if he had been promoted he would not have given it up; along with that, the conviction wormed itself into her mind that the kind of work Everett could do was probably about the same kind of work that Gus Beckley did — not very exalted, truly! Of course Everett was worth a dozen Gus Beckleys, Sandra told herself hastily; but people didn't know that. You had to have some luck to bring out what was in you; look at her own case! She resolved to ask no more questions; Everett's chance would come, and in the meanwhile he ought to take a rest, and have a good time, she thought maternally.

Everett established himself, on this tacit understanding, very willingly. He contrived to make no trouble in the small household; like any other Boardman, he knew the ethics of hospitality backwards and forwards, and could have preached a sermon on the whole duty of guests, facts to which the admiration and devotion of all the servants bore eloquent witness. He had a room at the apartment and a key and came and went at his pleasure — privileges he never abused, for Everett was a decent and temperate man; even if his morals had been less stable, he would have held himself in check in his sister's house. *Noblesse oblige!* He might have been tramping the streets from morning to night in search of employment; but if so, he did not speak of it, and appeared every day fresh, point-devise, and high-bred of air much more like a young prince sojourning incognito than a clerk out of a job. Some-

times he went with Sandra to the theatre where his introduction made just the sensation she had predicted, to her huge entertainment. Everett, for his own part, was a good deal embarrassed by it; he was not at all vain of his looks and would have preferred to be remarked for other gifts or attributes, as for instance, his skill at billiards, or his powers of repartee. When any of the girls commented rapturously in words intended for him to overhear on the cut of his profile, and the breadth of his shoulders, Mr. Boardman, far from feeling flattered, departed abruptly from their neighbourhood, in a fume. "Couple of damn fools!" he would ejaculate. "Oh, forgive me, Sandra, I couldn't help it!"

Sandra only laughed; like most women she did not object to a good, mouth-filling oath from one of her own mankind once in a while. "You know looks are a terribly important matter to stage-people, Ev," she reminded him. "At least, they think about it and talk about it more than outsiders. The funny thing is that all the while, one can get along perfectly well without any looks to speak of! I'm not really pretty, but I make up well, and —"

"Well, no, you haven't got regular features, but — you've got something else, San, that's ever so much better. You've always had it. I don't know what it is, but it makes the rest of them look like pikers," said her brother with pride and fondness. "Here now, don't do that!" he expostulated in alarm, seeing tears brim to her eyes.

"It's — it's because I love to have you pleased with me," said Sandra, swallowing hard.

"Well, don't get — er — temperamental, and all that, you know, and work up a scene!" said Everett, with strong distaste. "That *would* be stage-y, sure enough!"

Sandra choked herself off in a panic; notwithstanding his disavowals, she could not wholly rid her mind of the

fear that Everett was on the watch for signs of deterioration in her. He might have found them, the girl thought, nervously aware of changes in herself, and wondering if they could possibly be changes for the worse. The very finish of Everett's manners disturbed her; he infallibly said and did the right thing, he was always interested or pretended to be, pleasant, companionable, yet armoured impalpably with reserves. Just so had she herself been when she first essayed this life; what had happened to her? She doubted if she could take up and practice again all the graceful social artifices at which she had been so adept once upon a time. The distinctions that loomed so important in those days had all levelled down; she could not care, she could not take the time, to draw the line between "nice" and "common" people nowadays; the world across the footlights was made up of both, whose money paid her equally, and to whom she owed an equal duty. And for the world this side, it was a place where who you were and from what sprung were of no slightest interest to anybody; the single thing that mattered was what you could do. Sandra found that she had insensibly fallen into the habit of thinking that that was all that mattered anywhere; but now Everett intentionally or not, in a hundred slight ways, by a hundred slight words, reminded her of the old standards disquietingly. The young women who made eyes at him, the young men most of whom tried covertly and not successfully to copy him, Miss Vera Lloyd whose persecutions and intrigues magically ceased immediately after his appearance behind the Marionettes' curtain, Levison whom he had considerably impressed — what would they have thought if they had known what Everett said when their backs were safely turned, how he laughed at and parodied them, what a com-

edy he made of neatly avoiding being seen with them, or allowing them to become, as he said, "too friendly"?

Aforetime Sandra had said and done the same things in the same spirit; the society to which the Boardman young people were born saw no harm in this particular species of two-facedness. There, it was understood that nobody could be at one and the same time sincere and polite; to take others literally or at their surface value was to be calamitously unsophisticated. Everybody was on his guard, and the rules of the game were somewhat better known and, shocking to admit, much more consistently observed than the Ten Commandments. But the population of the Marionettes exhibited a singular ignorance of all this finesse; they were direct and simple as children; class traditions, class standards, class feeling did not exist for them; it was an atmosphere wherein every tub stood on its own bottom. They were not dull and the youngest of them was a veteran beside Everett Boardman when it came to practical knowledge of the world; yet, compared with him, they gave an effect of unworldliness. For one item, it was not possible to imagine a society in which Everett would not have appeared becomingly, to which he could not have accommodated himself; whereas, in numberless circles, high and low alike, the poor Marionettes would have been a terrific misfit. The fact was part and parcel of an advantage he had over them which Sandra, unreasonably enough, found a little unfair.

The season closed. After a run which had exceeded in length Levison's original calculation by half again the figure, continuing through the devastating heat of one entire summer and well into the next. "Little Bo-Peep" was to take the road in the autumn, being succeeded on the boards of the Marionettes by "Hey-Diddle-Diddle" another of

the miscellaneous collections of young women, low comedians, scenery, songs, dances, rapid-fire dialogues and deafening orchestral effects for which that place of sterling entertainment was noted. The new piece, however, would not begin its career until October, a date to which the Rosenbergs religiously or superstitiously adhered for all their openings; everybody would be busy with rehearsals for weeks beforehand, but in the meantime the Marionettes thankfully rested, at their homes if they happened to have homes, at the camps and resorts favoured by their kind, at those farms they talked about so much, and Sandra herself at the Catskill retreat which she had leased. Her part in the forthcoming production would put the Queen of Spades, the top card in the pack completely in the shade, Levison enthusiastically believed — not that it gave opportunities for the display of histrionic talent; the last thing required of any actor, male or female, on the Marionettes' staff was that he or she should be able to act! "They can go to these Ibsen-Shaw-Maeterlinck-Irish-Gaelic joints if they want the high-brow stuff," Levison observed without animus. "Say, listen! The average theatre crowd — and that means the visiting crowd that comes to New York from all over the country, they're the ones that fill the theatres — the average crowd wants to be amused. They want to hear the latest slang, and see the clothes, and get a line on the last song-hit or dance-step, so they can go back home and swell around and tell the folks who's who on Broadway. What gets 'em is a good peppy show, the kind we put on, with some fellow that can make 'em laugh, and a chorus of peaches and a special attraction like — like 'Sandra,'" he brought out with an awkwardly humorous glance. "Well, that's the public we cater to, and I guess we do it all right, or they wouldn't keep on coming. And say, listen, maybe we

don't earn our money, huh? Anybody that thinks that kind of a show is the easiest to get up, fools himself badly. We spent twenty-five thousand on 'Bo-Peep' before the curtain went up. These lads that are elevating the stage with plays that if they were printed so the authorities could get on to 'em, they wouldn't let 'em through the mails — all they've got to do is to hire some other elevator, only the artist kind, to paint a back-drop that looks like a view of the coal-cellar at midnight when you go down without a light, set a couple of chairs in front of it, and there you are! It's all part of the — the dope, you know. I could do it if I wanted to; it's easy enough when you know how, to flimflam the culture crowd. But I'd rather stick in the straight show business where you give the public their money's worth."

"I hope they'll keep on liking me," said Sandra.

"They're all right till they get tired. Nobody can hold 'em after they get tired," Levison said with a sort of circuitous frankness. "It won't be your — I mean it won't be anybody's fault when that happens. They just get tired. That's why so many shows are taken off when it looks like they're so popular they could go on forever; the management gets wise to that tired feeling coming along. It's all part of a system; you have to have system in this business same as in any other business. Rosenberg Brothers always send 'em on tour for one more season, and that ends 'em. Enough's a plenty. Of course, lots of old stuff is all the time being overhauled and named something else, and brought up-to-date and tried out just as if it was something new, and like as not, the second time or so, it gets over! Take 'A Cereal Story' for instance, that they put on up at the Acme last winter. Swinnerton had that first at the Fifty-ninth Street house, and they called it 'Mush-and-Milk' and it was a first-class fizzle. Then

Swinnny got it fixed up a little, and changed the name to 'Breakfast for Two' and went over to the Shakespeare with it, and scored another fizzle. Then he hired Danny Fitzgerald; and this guy that nobody ever heard of before, Milton Legree, turns up with this song, 'Register Love,' and they call the show 'A Cereal Story' and move up to the Acme, and Fitz sings the song, and the next night they're turning 'em away! That's how it goes. The public don't notice. Anyhow I sometimes think people like to laugh at the same old jokes, and cry in the same old places they always have, only you mustn't let 'em know it's old. And you have to vary your stellar attraction on that account —"

"I won't be new next year —"

"What makes you think you've got to do the worrying?" interrupted Sandra's manager jocosely. "Let Max do it! That's what I'm for and I don't look as if I was losing sleep over it, now do I? You'll have to have new costumes — we'll feature that big. Better get 'em from this — now — what's her name? — Louise. And of course new dances. Say, listen, that makes me think of something. That 'Falling Leaf,' you know —" he paused. "You can't guess right every time."

Sandra understood him. The "Falling Leaf" dance had not been a pronounced success. It was designed to exhibit her versatility, and for a foil, as it were, to the fiery, or coquettish, or sentimental, or merely "cute" rôles — so to call them — wherein she achieved such triumphs. The title conveyed a sombre suggestion which Sandra, with her conscientious artistry had striven to illustrate, as it turned out, only too well. In sad-coloured chiffons with a wreath of sere maple, she was the ghost of summer, of departed youth, of dead hopes, drifting or whirling about the stage with a mad and heart-breaking futility. Marion-

ettes audiences, of whom Levison's estimate was fairly correct, while they did not quite know what to make of the spectacle, beheld it with a vague discomfort which they vaguely resented. They applauded but with a hint of reserve which the well-skilled faculties of the Rosenbergs speedily detected. The "Falling Leaf" vanished from the program overnight; Sandra's next novelty was "Powder-Puff" in which she was brought on in a pink and gilt box, and emerging swathed fluffily in white with bobbing balls of eiderdown, executed any number of dainty pirouettes and poses in the style to which her followers were accustomed, which they associated with her, this time winning an unstinted, a whole-souled expression of approval. The episode should have been a valuable lesson.

"I know. They didn't like it," she assented at once; but added wistfully, "*I* liked it, though, I can't see what was the matter with it. Do I have to give up that kind of dance altogether? Why? Why can't I —"

Levison wagged his head. "Too bad!" said he, conveying his adverse judgment indirectly, yet conclusively as before. "I liked the 'Falling Leaf' too — I thought it was beautiful. But what's the use? You've got to give the public what it wants. Now the 'Powder-Puff' dance —"

Sandra interrupted with a little impatient gesture. "Oh, that!"

"You thought it was nothing but fluff, hey?" said Levison. "All the same it caught 'em and the other didn't. What's the use? I expect Danny Fitzgerald would rather sing 'Pagliacci' than 'Register Love,' and I expect he could sing it all right, too. But he sticks to 'Register Love,' and shows his business-head. I don't believe in knocking the poor old public for not having good taste. That doesn't get you anything. It doesn't get you any-

thing like this anyhow," he finished, indicating their surroundings with a sagacious smile.

They were sitting on the terrace of Sandra's cottage, whose un-cottage-like façade provided a back-drop almost as theatrically conceived as those before which she was wont to figure nightly. Ivy wrapped the chimnies, a casement opened out here and there, a delightful wrought-iron weather-vane stood from the comb of the steep-pitched roof against the clear, hot sky. From the balustrade in front of them flights of steps dropped to a lower level whence arose all sorts of garden fragrances. There was a distant view of a mountain with a flat shining loop of water about its base. In the middle of the scene, the big green-and-white striped umbrella shading them, the table and lounging-chairs and green-and-white striped cushions appeared with a deliberately countryfied smartness not incongruous.

"Some place!" said Levison. "Hello, who is that down there coming along behind that row of what d'ye call 'ems? Those tall thick green bushes, I mean. See 'em?"

"Everett and Mary, probably. They must be coming back from the postoffice; that's where they said they were going. The green things are supposed to be a screen-planting of cypress, Mr. Levison."

"Cypress, hey? It looks nice, but I don't believe it grew there naturally. Some landscape artist laid the place out. Those fellows are pretty high-priced, and I guess they get a rake-off on all these fancy, imported shrubs and things from the nursery-man they give the order to. Well, a place like this is bound to run into money," said Levison philosophically. "There they come again! Yes, that's your brother. It's kind of funny to see him with little Schultze. Like — like —" he searched his mind for a

simile. "Like a Ford and a Packard alongside! He seems to like her pretty well, though."

"Does he?" said Sandra, rather startled but by the other's manner more than his words. "I hadn't noticed."

"Well, put it that she seems to like him pretty well, then," said Levison, grinning significantly.

"Yes, but Mary's engaged."

"Sure enough, sure enough! And of course she wouldn't throw friend Beckley down for a prince like your brother, if she got the chance. No girl was ever known to do a thing like that," retorted Levison. "Never mind, I don't see him tying himself up with anybody — getting married runs into money, too. And he won't have more than enough even if I land him a job with Rosenbergs —"

Her face of stark astonishment and half articulated exclamation arrested him. "Why, didn't you know? Why, I thought — I took it for granted you — well, I knew you wouldn't put him up to asking me exactly — but still I thought you might —" he stammered. "It wouldn't have been anything out-of-the-way if you had. I wouldn't have thought anything of it. I — I'd like to — to — to do anything you wanted —" and here Mr. Levison abandoned the attempt at explanation, probably finding himself floundering into deeper water than ever. "Why, yes, he's been after me ever since he got here — ever since you introduced him. I thought you knew all along!"

Sandra sat dumbfounded. Why Everett should not have taken her into his confidence fully and freely at the beginning was incomprehensible to her; but not more incomprehensible than that he should have thrown up his position at home and come to New York with such a project. After all that he had said — all that he was still saying!

"I got it into my head you'd written him to come," said Levison, wondering to see her so disturbed over what was to him an everyday occurrence, as she knew. If he had to count up all the people who approached him to get places for their relatives, he would need as many volumes as the Congressional Record, was his private comment. "It would have been all right if you had," he assured her again.

"I didn't write," said Sandra. "What — what sort of a position does he want?"

Levison stared. "What *sort* of a — Why, with some show, of course. With the Rosenbergs, or anybody. He knows I wouldn't have much pull if he was after a seat on the stock exchange," he said with uneasy jocularly. She did not smile, however; and whatever else was wrong, Levison was seized with the fear that he himself had offended. Truly he had done nothing; but she was so different. "Say, listen! I know you wouldn't ask any favours, not for yourself nor your brother, nor anybody. I know you're not that kind," he said humbly. "I didn't mean — I just thought maybe —"

"What does Everett want to do?" Sandra asked.

"Why — oh, well, anything. He can dance some, and sing, and play the piano a little, can't he? He told me he could. And he's right there on the looks. He could do all right, I guess. Say, listen, don't get yourself all worked up. It's going to be all right. I'll get him something."

He spoke with real kindness. Everett could mimic his "Say, listen!" his way of flourishing his hands perfectly. Nose, moustache, jewellery, ostentatious cane, top-hat, fur-lined overcoat, loud laughter, cheap slang, commercialized tastes — there was not a thing about him, inside or out, that Everett had not found material for entertainment, for

hilarious contempt. Sandra herself had joined in the laughter, a recollection peculiarly hateful at this moment.

"You are very kind, I — I want to thank you very much," she got out with a miserable stiffness. There was really nothing to say. Levison eyed her doubtfully; but the next instant, Everett and Mary, mounting the steps, put an end to this scene.

They had the day's paper, which, for at once, as Everett reported gaily, actually contained some news. An Austrian grandduke or crown prince or somebody and his wife had been assassinated at one of those places with a jaw-breaking name, those Balkan places where they were always having trouble. Some anarchist threw a bomb into their automobile as they were riding along the street. "He didn't like the idea of having these royalties from outside coming to run the country, so in his freedom-loving, high-spirited way, he blew them up. That's what you might call practical patriotism. Fine fellow! Fine race!" said Everett, smilingly satirical, lighting a cigarette.

CHAPTER X

BY the time Sandra had a chance to speak to her brother in private, Mr. Levison's late communication had somewhat dwindled in importance; so that she was measurably satisfied by Everett's explanation that he had kept silence expressly to avoid worrying her — it was all in the air anyhow — he could not tell how he would suit the stage or how the stage would suit him — he knew very well he was no such born dancer as herself, for instance — he had not the makings of a star — but Levison and one or two others had been rather encouraging, and he was going to make a stab at it — no harm in trying. Meanwhile he was determined, first of all, that she should not wear herself to a frazzle over him, and secondly, that nobody should have any ground for saying that he had gotten a start through being his sister's brother. Everett made this last declaration with a smiling vehemence, which masked, Sandra thought, a very serious pride and resolution. She could scarcely find fault with him for conduct which was, after all, so "Boardman-ish," the girl told herself. Everett, for all he had the advantage of being a man, was just as impractical and just as visionary as she had been at the outset; and he was as thoroughly steeped in the family ideas, about which, take them for all in all, she could still perceive a kind of wrong-headed dignity. The trouble was they were calamitously out of date now and never should have been taken literally at any time. She had ceased to consider them, and Everett would too, presently.

"I know — I understand," she said warmly. "The

only thing, Ev, is that after a while you'll find out it doesn't make a bit of difference to anybody how you get a start. Suppose some manager had given you a try-out just because you told him you were my brother. Nobody would have cared. You might just as well have come to me in the beginning, and let me help you. All this time I thought you were looking around for a position in a bank or something like that — the same sort of thing you had had at home. You could have been working — taking lessons and practising the way I did — ”

“ Oh, I don't think that would do me much good. I don't expect to be a star, I tell you. Anyway I can't very well take lessons,” said Everett, reticently.

Sandra recognized with a dart of impatience the Boardman convention which withheld him from telling her in plain words that he had not the money. “ That will be all right. I'll see de Voyna, and arrange with him to give you some drill,” she said; and sure enough, Everett acquiesced without impolite curiosity as to how she would “ arrange.”

“ It sounds so odd to hear you call people by their last names that way — ‘ *de Voyna*, ’ ” was his only comment. “ That seems to be one of the Marionettes' little ways, though. Nobody ever troubles about ‘ Miss ’ or ‘ Mister. ’ It's delightfully informal.”

“ I suppose I've picked it up from the others,” said Sandra, a little taken aback. “ I didn't know I was doing it.”

“ Well, you ought to be careful, San. It's easy to get into common ways when you have to be so much with these people.”

There was a moment of silence while Sandra looked at him, shrinking before the first rays of an unwelcome enlightenment. She would have offered herself her usual excuses for Everett, but realized reluctantly that they were

inadequate; for once, the Boardman code could not be held responsible. "Everett," she said at length; "you know I — I don't think you ought to talk in that way — in that tone, I mean — about '*these people*,' as if — as if they were beneath us. I don't think you ought to *feel* that way. Perhaps they weren't brought up the same way we were, but that doesn't make them an inferior order of beings. We're all on the same level here, anyhow; if there's any difference, it's in their favour. Any one of '*these people*' can do the very thing you want to do, and do it better. If you are going to — to cast in your lot with them, you ought — you ought not —"

Everett's whimsically arched eyebrows silenced her. "'*Inferior order of beings*'" — "'*Cast in our lot with them!*'" he quoted. "Whee! Isn't that the elegant language, though? But you didn't need to give me such a blast, San. You don't suppose I'm going to let them see what I think of them? What put that into your head? I've always been very careful not to hurt their feelings, you know that. I've no doubt they're all very good, kind, decent people if they do have erroneous ideas about dress and table-manners, and how to behave in a public place, and a few other little things on the same order," Everett began to laugh in his good-humoured, tolerant, disarming way. "Come now, Sandra, you know yourself they're *impossible* — as companions — friends — socially — you know what I mean."

Sandra did indeed know what he meant and a sense of futility invaded her. Everything her brother said was reasonable, and his exposition of his principles was just; he would have thought it boorish to be unkind in so cheap and stupid a fashion as he had outlined. He would no more hurt their feelings outright than he would take a bludgeon to their bodies. There were other ways of

achieving the same end but with skill and subtlety, which, perhaps, he did not condemn. Sandra knew all about them, too. A certain axiom of her mother's to the effect that a gentlewoman had only one kind of manners, occurred to her. "Only one kind of manners," Mrs. Richard would announce firmly — and then proceed to practise half a dozen kinds with an untroubled spirit! Sandra had already fumblingly discovered that this sophisticated humanity was in its essence not humane, that it was at the very opposite pole from the authentic feeling of human fellowship, equal effort and equal responsibility. The girl had learned in this queer school, from teachers who never suspected that they were teaching; now she was oppressed by the conviction that Everett would never learn, and yet more heavily by the other conviction that the fault lay not as much with the Boardman system as with Everett himself.

In the middle of all this, another of Levison's statements coming into her head, caused Sandra to smile, instead of adding to her anxieties as might have been supposed. The system had, at least, the qualities of its defects; Everett, she was confident, would not deliberately get into any sort of philandering complication with Mary Schultze. He looked upon Mary very much as he looked upon a waitress, a ladies' maid, an office-girl; namely, as a young woman to whom no matter how pretty and attractive and ladylike she was, no gentleman, no Boardman, would pay attentions. Letting morals alone, it would show the extreme of bad taste, according to Everett; if he had wanted to carry on a flirtation, he possibly might not have boggled over such a point as the Juliet's being married or single; the emphatic requirement was that she should belong to his own class. He treated Mary precisely as he treated everybody, with a charming, frank, spontaneous, considerate courtesy; and in private got unlimited

fun out of her awkwardnesses, her literal spirit, her affair with "Gus," her boarding-house aunt, her big angular nose, the fashionless fashion in which she combed her extraordinarily meek-looking fair hair, and wore her prosaic garments. Sandra judged him correctly, for once; he had no idea of pursuing Mary. Alack and alas, it was the other way about, as she presently observed with dismay.

For poor Mary had discovered in Everett that prince of romance, that noble, ardent, mushy, conqueringly handsome being, spotless — but with a spice of the devil in him! — whom every girl enshrines imaginatively — every girl and hosts of maturer females, wives and spinsters alike, if the truth were known. He seldom comes true, luckily, for a male population composed of these paragons would be, in the profane view, nothing short of a public calamity; but this very rarity enhanced Everett, in Mary's eyes. She had never seen anybody like him; the magazine young men, as smooth and long-legged and straight-featured as they were, couldn't hold a candle to him; the moving-picture heroes, to adopt the vernacular — as did Mary herself — weren't "in it" alongside of Everett Boardman. All the qualities which she so admired in Sandra, he possessed in double measure; and besides the distinction, the manners that were at once so fine and so natural, Everett was indisputably good-looking. Whereas even her warmest admirers would allow that Miss Boardman's charm was not based upon physical perfection, they would contend that that fact went to prove her ability. She could make you believe momentarily that she was beautiful or hideous, or what she chose; she could be Titania, she could be the Witch of Endor — and all the while she was nothing but a wiry little white-faced girl with brilliant eyes.

That Everett was similarly endowed, Mary was positive, though nothing he had done so far warranted her. To

any one who made that point she would have retorted that Mr. Boardman had not been given the chance, and that he would be just as much of a hit as his sister if a *certain person* were to take the same kind of interest in him. She had no patience with de Voyna for not displaying more enthusiasm over the new pupil, and did not scruple to accuse him of jealousy; and even reproached Sandra herself for not influencing the *certain person* in her brother's behalf. To attack the Rosenbergs was a little beyond her courage, but according to Levison's own cynically grinning declaration, she would have pestered the life out of him if he had not craftily dodged whenever he saw her coming. She quarrelled with the unfortunate Gus, broke off the engagement and sent him about his business. Never was there so complete and disastrous a change wrought in a mild, prudent, sensible young woman; it was a sorry spectacle, the more so because the foolishness was all on one side, the wrong side, the girl's side.

For Everett was not foolish — not he! Instead he was — at least in the beginning — amused and annoyed and afraid of being made ridiculous, and rather chivalrously distressed. He did not want Mary to trail him around, he did not want her to sit in his presence unnaturally silent or unnaturally gay, staring at him with great eyes, starting when he spoke to her, and getting red all over her face, particularly at the tip of that melancholy nose. He did not want her fussing maternally over him, boring other people about him. He did not want her any way at all, but he could not help being polite to her, and he could not help her misconstruing his politeness. "Confound these people!" the young man thought impatiently; "they take everything in dead earnest. If you look once at a girl, she thinks you're interested; and if you look twice — Good Lord, you might as well propose! They're ready to get

married at the drop of a hat. Of course they haven't got any people or homes or positions to consider; they haven't had any social experience, and nine out of ten don't know what their own grandfather's names were. I suppose that accounts for them."

Mr. Levison, meanwhile, was as good as his word. He got Everett taken on as an "extra" man with the Climax Film Company, one of the directors, Mr. Ferd Solomons, being a personal friend. They were about to produce a screen version of *Rip Van Winkle*, and, as it chanced, had selected a site among the mountains, not far from Sandra's own boundaries. Everett could journey to and from his daily labours by motor, Levison benevolently pointed out. "They only pay the extras three dollars a day, but it's an opening," said he. "Say, listen!" He addressed Sandra; "they were keen to get *you*, when they heard about his being your brother. I said I didn't see how they could work you into that *Rip Van Winkle* stuff. There wouldn't be any part for you, not if they played it like Joe Jefferson used to. Ferd was all ready for me, though. He was going to fix it up for you to come on as the Queen of the Fairies, or one of these — now — gnomes, you know, and do a dance by moonlight with a ravine and waterfall in the back. Some scene, hey? You've got to hand it to Ferd for the ideas! Still I turned it down," said Mr. Levison not without some regret. "It wouldn't be good business just now, in my judgment. Lots of people have a notion that when a star goes in the movies, it's because she — *he* — isn't drawing any more on the regular stage. All piffle, of course, but you've got to study the public — you've got to keep right in touch with 'em every minute. Anyhow, what's the hurry? You can do it any time. Your brother here is in a different position. It's an opening for him, as I was saying."

Everett thanked him — with much the same manner. Sandra thought, that he would have bestowed a tip. Nobody else could possibly have found fault with it; it was perfect of its kind; but Sandra was unquestionably by way of being somewhat touchy these days. She was conscious of it, and set it down to nerves, over-work, temperament, anything, in short, except the real cause which she would not acknowledge to herself; that is, a creeping dissatisfaction or disappointment or disillusion about Everett.

The young man undertook this not very elevated employment with a kind of light-hearted and aloof interest, preserving that attitude of Prince Hal perversely frolicking with his inferiors which only Sandra recognized and resented. "Another Jew! Apparently there're nobody but Jews in the business!" he reported after meeting Solomons. "Have to be careful —" He aimed a burlesque blow at his own nose and dodged it. "Ouch! That was a close one! This Solomons fellow *looks* it all over, though; he's much more of a type than our friend the late Mr. Levi's son. Solomons is the real, orthodox, pawn-broking, *kosher*-meat kind that we have so many of at home. You ought to see him dashing around in his shirt-sleeves, bawling at us supes to 'get action.' But he's greatest when he's showing Gretchen and Rip and the rest how to 'register' anger and suspense and scorn and grief, and all that. Think of a Jew Rip, if you can, without laughing! It's all I can do to keep my face straight. But if you'll believe me, nobody else seems to see anything funny in it; they're as sober as judges, every man-jack, and try to do just what he says!" Everett himself, faring to the Climax encampment day by day in the big automobile, at ease and cool and dressed with an incomparable careless good taste, was an unique apparition

for an extra, and one which greatly intrigued the other extras, until they heard who he was. He brought back more amusing stories of their naïve curiosity. Along with them he appeared in the rôles of villager and soldier; anon as one of Hudson's phantom crew, and in the May-pole dance which Solomons, the fertile in devices, introduced for an appropriate wind-up to the performance. Everett attracted some notice professionally also; he carried off even the ungainly costume of the Dutch colonists to advantage, and posed, walked, swung his staff or saluted a lady with so much more grace and dignity than can commonly be got for three dollars a day that the director was a little impressed and once or twice spoke vaguely of advancing him. His fellow-extras kindly warned him that there was nothing in these fair words; but indeed Everett was not likely to be carried away by them; he regarded Mr. Solomons with the same negligent forbearance which he felt for everybody else connected with the theatrical profession.

It exasperated Sandra; all the more, perhaps, because she wanted to be proud of her brother, wanted her lifelong admiration and affection to be justified. She was far more jealous for him than for herself, and if he had entered the ranks with her and eclipsed her, would have been happy over it. If, failing that, he had merely adapted himself to this world, tried to understand it, met it on its own simple, plain and forthright terms, she would have been satisfied. But it was as if the ideas of caste in which they had both been brought up had encased Everett, heart and brain, in some shell of crystalline hardness and brilliancy, impenetrable. Sandra told herself that she could not get *at* him. When she attempted, lamely enough, to argue, he either put her aside with a laugh or listened with a blank courtesy, as if her speech were Sanskrit;

when she stormed, he would warn her with genuine reluctance, against descending to melodrama. Sandra had no answer for that; it threw her into a panic, calling up an image of herself, excited, shrill-voiced, vulgar, making a scene; so that Everett who never lost his temper or forgot himself for an instant, though he must have been sorely tried, invariably retired with the honours. She was right; it was impossible to get at him, by the means that Sandra could command at any rate; and every day seemed to add another course to the intangible wall building between them.

Levison, arriving unexpectedly from town, and walking in upon her immediately after one of these tilts — it happened, as often before, that he himself had been the bone of contention! — was mightily perturbed. "What's the matter? What have you been crying about? You haven't got any bad news from home? Is your mother sick or — or anything?" he insisted on knowing. He has been quoted as of the opinion that artistic stars should not have any sort of domestic ties, and now inwardly reaffirmed it with a strong anathema directed at the Boardman connection to the farthest degree of relationship.

"No, nothing's the matter. Everybody is all right —" Sandra managed to tell him; then, to her helpless consternation, broke down suddenly and utterly. "Oh, I can't bear the way Everett — the t-things he s-says —" she sobbed, with her hands over her face. All at once she experienced a strange comfort in thus giving way; Levison would understand; *he* would see nothing melodramatic, nothing unworthy about it!

"Everett, hey?" he said, gnawing the shoe-brush moustache thoughtfully. "Well, don't cry so hard; you'll hurt yourself. Everett? Well, now, almost all brothers and sisters have a — a little run-in once in a while. It's

funny; you get madder at each other than you would at an outsider, and say worse things. Never mind him. He's all right —"

"You don't *know* — he — you don't *know*!" cried out Sandra. The very kindness of the other's manner, of his effort to rehabilitate Everett, humiliated her.

Levison studied her with the eye of an expert diagnostician. Privately he inquired of himself, could he beat it? And further confided to the same person that "brother" was a bird! "'Brother' has a little this-style-two-for-a-nickel job keeping books or something back home; 'brother' don't amount to a row of pins. But he's in society, and stage-dancers aren't — isn't it just too shocking about sister? He's so ashamed of her he can't hardly hold up his head — till he gets wise to her making about forty-eleven times as much money as he's ever seen and then why shouldn't he come east and get in the game himself? He can live off of her in the meanwhile. Fine! Splendid! At-a-boy!" thought Sandra's director with a species of admiring contempt. But aloud he only hazarded: "Has he been asking you — that is, does he — now — want money?"

"No, no! Not now — not this time. But I don't mind *that*. I want to — I like to! If it was only *that* —! But he doesn't appreciate — he doesn't understand — I can't *make* him understand! Everything you've done for him, I mean. You're all the time doing something — and he — he seems to think it's nothing — he — I hate the way he talks —"

Levison stood over her unaesthetically posed, with his hands in his pockets, looking down at her bowed head; she did not see a dark colour mount quickly all over his coarse-complexioned face, and as quickly fade, leaving it paler than usual. "Talks about *me*? You're crying be-

cause — ? ” he began precipitately, but at once checked himself as if before some obstacle the approaches to which must first be reconnoitred. “ He don’t appreciate what I’ve done? Well, now — maybe I didn’t do it just for *him* — quite.”

“ I know,” said Sandra simply. “ It’s because of his being my brother. But just the same, he oughtn’t to — he ought to — ”

He sat down beside her with a movement conveying a certain resolution made and acted upon point-blank. “ Say, listen! I know all about your brother. He’s a society fellow and an aristocrat, and I know he looks down on everybody that isn’t — ”

“ Oh, no, *please!* Everett doesn’t — he’s not like *that* — he doesn’t do *that* — ” Sandra stammered, horrified at the bald statement; it belonged in the same category as other truths too unseemly to be uttered. “ Everett wouldn’t — ”

“ No, of course he wouldn’t tell anybody so,” pursued Levison undisturbed — in fact, with a flickering grin. “ He wouldn’t go around swelling himself all up and telling people: ‘ I’m Everett Boardman! Who in the blankety-blank are you? ’ That would be crude, you know. Besides, he doesn’t have to. He looks the part all over; he acts it, without saying a word. He can’t any more help it than he can help breathing. Well, now, if you don’t mind my saying so, that’s all he’s got. That’s all there is to him, and he’s right to play it up. As far as it goes, it’s invaluable. There isn’t one man in a thousand that’s got it.”

Sandra was without words; she sat gazing at him, bending all her energies to grasp what he was saying.

“ Fact! ” said Levison, nodding at her. “ That air, or manner, or front, or whatever you want to call it, ought

to be worth dollars to him. In addition, he's a very handsome man, but looks don't stick. And if he doesn't watch out, and lets himself get two or three inches thicker round the waist, and a little round bald spot on top, it'll be harder for him to play that aristocratic business. And that's *all he's got!*" repeated Levison forcibly. He was serious now; his seriousness dominated, despite the grotesque image he evoked; and Sandra saw Everett stout, middle-aged, devoid of charm, the figure of cheap tragedy that he would undoubtedly be.

"*All — he's — got!*" said Levison again. "If you don't mind my saying so —?" And as Sandra, still speechless, shook her head, he added: "You know what I mean? You've got it yourself."

"*I have it?*" ejaculated Sandra. Panic struck through her.

"Oh, you've got a lot more besides. You've got everything!" Levison said in swift understanding. He paused a moment, then said, lowering his voice: "You're different. There isn't anybody like you. That's what took me at the very first."

His manner said so much more than his words that Sandra withdrew her eyes in another panic of very different origin. She felt herself growing scarlet, cast desperately about for something to say, and found her mind empty. The sofa creaked as Levison hitched himself nearer her.

"You knew, didn't you? Girls always do."

"I — I suppose I did," faltered Sandra miserably. She was wishing wildly that he was not a Jew; that his skin was not so oily and shiny; that the sofa had not creaked with his weight just now; that his hands were not so thick and excessively manicured and covered with black hair on the backs; that he did not use perfumed soap and

wear shoes that pinched ; that he would speak in a natural voice, and not breathe in that gasping way. She wished that she could stop thinking these silly and degrading things. She was in an anguish of compassion, of unreasonable fury at herself.

"It was a case of 'first sight' with me," said Levison. He moved toward her again, dropping his arm along the back of the sofa behind her. Their shoulders almost touched. Suddenly he began to talk eagerly, without restraint. "Say, listen! The minute I saw you at that Claude outfit, I said to myself: 'Here's the girl that gets mine!' You don't know what you looked like in that bunch of selling platers. Why, they weren't even good enough for scenery for you! I saw right off the kind you were — aristocrat through and through. Say, you know I was afraid you'd see I was crazy about you, and yet I wanted you to. You used to bow to me on the street before we'd been regularly introduced, but I knew too much to get fresh with you because of that; I knew you were only doing it out of kindness. You'd have done it for a hired man — a chauffeur or a butler or anybody like that, if you happened to know 'em. I used to plan what I'd say to you when we met, and then when we *did* meet I couldn't say a word of it; I couldn't say anything sensible. I used to wonder how many different kinds of a fool you thought I was —"

"No, no, Mr. Levison, I — I didn't think — I didn't notice —"

"Then when I got over that, when I got so I could talk like my natural self, I was still kind of afraid — afraid you'd know, and afraid you wouldn't know! And I couldn't get up the nerve to tell you. One time I nearly did; that time when we were talking about my going away, remember — ?"

It seemed to Sandra abominable that she did not remember at all, abominable to tell him so, abominable to encourage him by a humane fib. But she was spared the choice for Levison went on without waiting for her, pouring out the fulness of his heart with an abandon in which the girl could detect a note of confident expectation naïve and pathetic and terrifying.

"I saw you weren't ready for me. You knew, but you sort of shied off from the notion. You wanted to take your own time about it. Well, I thought to myself, that was all right! I guess that's a girl's privilege. So I held myself down to strictly business relations, like I've always done. But, my God, it's been hard!" he uttered, with the gesture Everett so often burlesqued. Some ironic demon brought her brother before Sandra's eyes, flourishing his hands, raising his shoulders, copying the other's intonation with subtle exaggerations. She did not dare to look at her unfortunate suitor.

Levison drew a long, tremulous sigh. "I've told you now anyhow. I couldn't hold in any longer." He stooped towards her. "Say, little girl, it's all right? You do care a little, hey?"

Sandra sat dumb; at the moment she would have sold her soul to have cared for him, even to have been able to pretend it.

"I don't mean you feel the way I do," said Levison. "A woman can't, I guess. I — why, I'd lay down and let you walk over me; I'd stick my hand in the fire, if it would get you anything. Maybe you think that Marionettes' job and that record-breaker salary I held up Rosenberg for, maybe you think that's a whole lot! Why, say, listen, it's nothing to what I'd do for you, if — if — if we got married. You could have anything you wanted. You could keep on dancing, if you're set on it. I'll let you do

anything you feel like. I don't care just so you're happy."

He took her hand with a kind of timid violence. Sandra, within the circle of his trembling arm, was rigid. "I love you," said Levison, hoarsely.

There was a pause of sheer horror to the girl. Her hand lay in his inert; she divined that the contact which turned her to stone sent thrills of fierce rapture through the man, and the knowledge somehow shamed her.

"Can't you say something to me, Sandra?"

"I want to think," Sandra articulated with her cold lips.

"I'm going away, you know. It's a sure thing this time," said Levison with an ingenuous hopefulness.

"I've got to. I was going to take my passage this coming Saturday, and then I thought — I thought maybe I'd better wait and — and see if I wouldn't want two passages. I'd get one of those deck-suites on a fast boat, you know. The best's good enough for us, hey?"

Sandra could not control her recoil. "I — oh, please —!"

He let her slip from his arms in a little alarm. "Why, little girl, what's the matter? My God, don't cry; don't! What did I do? Was I rough? Say, listen, I didn't mean to scare you. I — I just *had* to tell you. Say, I guess I *am* a fool all right, all right! I hadn't any business talking about deck-suites, and — and speeding things up that way. *You're* the one to decide all that, of course. Say, forget it! You've got to have more time to think about it, you said just now, anyhow. Well —" he heaved another sigh. "I suppose you haven't been thinking about pretty much nothing else for months and months, like I've been. I ought to have remembered that. A thoroughbred like you is just a bundle of nerves, anyhow. Say, want me to go away?"

"Yes, please — only you've been so good to me — I'm so sorry —" stammered the girl. "I don't know what's the matter with me — I — I can't —"

"Can't make up your mind?" Levison queried. She moved her head non-committally, incapable of the truth. Levison got up lingeringly. "Well — all right — take your time," he said with forced patience. "I guess I'll have to go over by myself. I can go and get back in four weeks — or six maybe. Then you'll be ready, hey?"

He went, looking serious, but not particularly downcast; perhaps his prospects did not seem so dubious to him as they would have to any impartial eavesdropper on the scene. He went; and when Mary Schultze, guessing at what had occurred, imparted her suspicions to Everett, and when Everett by a roundabout joke or two hinted at Levison's pretensions, Sandra made no attempt at denial.

"He asked me to marry him, Everett," she said wearily. "I daresay you know it already. I'm to give him an answer when he gets back from Europe. He's sailing the first week in August."

Everett did not laugh, he did not sneer, he did not bring forward in objection Levison's race or manners or social standing, although any of these actions would have been natural from him. Instead he whistled under his breath, paused, then said with the semi-humorous gravity which he often assumed: "Well, San, he's the czar — the *main guy*, as Miss Lloyd would say. One wouldn't want to offend him — one wouldn't want to offend anybody, of course; but Levison could make it very unpleasant with all the authority he has. I suppose you're — you're going to temporize? Girls know all kinds of ways."

Sandra did not answer; she felt hopelessly that she had known beforehand just what Everett would say.

CHAPTER XI

LEVISON sailed on a steamer christened in compliment to an august foreign personage whom it is possible history will remember only because of this use of her name — if indeed history takes any note of the lady at all. The crowded records of our times will scarcely give much space to princesses, unless in some such connection. Sandra did not see her manager again before his departure, a fact for which the girl was remorsefully thankful; but the morning he left, she received a square, neat, taut envelope of roughened paper with the sign of a well-known photographer in one corner, which being opened revealed a sepia-coloured likeness that had "Yours faithfully, Max," sprawled slantwise across the bottom of it, with a great flourish trailing off from the final letter. There he stood, cane, silk hat, moustache, watch-chain, eye-compelling waistcoat and all, in a "grand-opera attitude," as Everett characterized it with laughter, for which nobody endowed with a grain of humour could have blamed him. Sandra heroically set the picture up on her desk.

If she did not miss her lover, with all the sentimental implications of that phrase, she certainly felt a deeper sense of isolation which might have gratified him; it frightened Sandra by making evident the extent of her dependence on him. She had often and freely said that she owed Levison everything, but now for the first time realized with what mortified and rebellious vanity, with what dire forebodings, that it was literally true. She did owe him everything, and, more bitter realization still, she

must continue to owe him. For, no matter how secure her position might appear, Sandra knew in her heart that were Levison's support and interest and advice to be withdrawn, she could not sustain herself an instant. Yes, she might laugh at, she might disdain his huckstering methods, his dollar-mark ethics, his pushing, clamorous, insistent pursuit of the public, but without all that, where would she be? She clung to her belief in herself with a kind of despairing arrogance, repeating that she *knew* she could dance; but she could not do these other things which, ironically, seemed to be just as necessary to the success of an artist. It humiliated her strangely to discover that Levison, for his part, did not believe in her; his innocent boasting proved it; he would have done the same, namely: made a popular star out of her, forced her down the public throat one way or another, had she been incapable of dancing a step. To be sure, her talent, such as it was, must have facilitated the enterprise, but to Levison that was merely incidental. He did not care whether she could dance or not; he had been governed all along by the old, the immemorially old desire of the man in love to get his beloved what she wanted, and be rewarded for it.

Well, then, Sandra sometimes thought desperately, why not reward him, and be done with it? He was a good man, she told herself warmly; there were fine qualities in his character besides the force which she had always recognized and respected; he loved her genuinely, and he had a right to expect some return for all he had done. If only he had not expected this particular kind of return! If only there had not been something hideously comic about the idea of being Mrs. Max Levison! She could see her mother's face; and imagination pitilessly rehearsed for her the poor lady's efforts to be gracious to such a son-in-law, to account for him and for Sandra herself, to save

the Boardman face, in short, before the Boardman world. As for that world, Sandra assured herself vehemently that she was done with it for good and all; at its best, represented by her mother, it was occupied with trivial matters and spent its strength in trivial pursuits; and at its worst, represented by Mrs. George Thatcher, it was a place of struggles and ambitions which in success or failure were equally ignoble. Nevertheless, she flinched in forecasting the comment which experience taught her would follow the news. So Sandra Boardman had fallen in line with the rest of them! Everybody on the stage gets married half-a-dozen times, you know; it's a habit! Sandra was just getting a start; the divorce would follow in due order; give her time. This first venture was her manager. Oh, yes, that was quite *en règle*, like having your jewels stolen; you married your manager, or else tore his eyes out — anything to get into the newspapers! He was a Jew. No, really? What an anti-climax! So that was all her wonderful, gorgeous career had come to. Dear me, she could have stayed at home and done that much — married a Jew!

It never entered her head to write home and invite counsel; the proceeding would have been as preposterous as to have referred Levison to her father. To shoulder her own responsibilities, to be completely alone in any crisis, were the privileges of independence. She would not have relinquished them; yet in her melancholy moods Sandra looked back wistfully upon the old order, compared it with the present, and wondered if the game were worth the candle after all.

As it happened, even if she had dreamed of returning to the rôle of the home-dwelling girl, it would have been impracticable; for that summer Mr. and Mrs. Richard had set out on a tour of the West which Sandra herself

persuaded them to take. "It's a wedding-present from me for your thirtieth anniversary," she had written. The Grand Cañon, San Francisco, Seattle, the National Park and Royal Gorge — letters and brilliantly illuminated postcards visited her from all these places; there were photographs of the two, smiling broadly, shrugged up in mufflers and winter coats on Pike's Peak while the Eastern summer-resorts sweltered through July days. They wrote gaily of misadventures and funny happenings, of the "weird" people they met, Cook's tourists, bands of the Fraternal Order of Owls, Buffaloes or what-not, on an outing. Over and over again they assured her that they were "having a beautiful time — just like a bride and groom, for all our two old grey heads!" Mrs. Boardman wrote. They seemed more like a pair of children, Sandra thought tenderly. Poor Moms, poor Dad, they had not been anywhere for a long while; she could not remember their having gone off on a jaunt together like this since she and Everett had grown up. The reason was not far to seek. She meant to make it up to them — all those years of self-denial, all the money and care they had lavished on their boy and girl. She had made a beginning already; next year she would — Sandra stopped short in the middle of her Alnaschar planning, envisaging the likelihood that what she would do next year depended on what she did this, on what she did at the end of four weeks, or six weeks.

That was the time set by Levison. Hundreds and thousands of Americans were looking ahead as confidently, millions of other races all over the world were going about their tiny, all-important affairs, taking reasonable thought for the morrow, with the huge drag-net of Circumstance about the feet of every one. Wherever men are, they have always lived in the midst of great events and daily mira-

cles; but it is only lately that we have become aware of it. Ominous news was circling the globe when Levison set out, arsenals were busy, troops in motion; a famous phrase concerning scraps of paper was already uttered; a young king had ringingly declared that his country was a country, not a road. And presently more news of as grave import clicked down the wireless mast of the princess's namesake, and caused that well-advised vessel to turn about in full career and make all speed on the backward route. Levison liked to tell of being waked at dawn by the sunlight blazing through the port where it had no business to enter, and wondering whether he had gotten drunk or been drugged, or suddenly gone insane overnight, so that the ship authorities had been obliged to confine him in another cabin on the opposite side. He hurried into some clothes and on deck, and found many other passengers similarly aroused, shivering in groups, besieging the officers as they passed. They told him what they had already heard. The Germans were advancing on the Belgian frontier; England had declared war; the whole continent of Europe was mad — mad!

The magnitude of the facts confounded their minds, like the incomprehensible magnitudes of the universe. War amongst half a dozen of the ultra-civilized nations at this date — in this twentieth century! It was an anachronism, an abhorrent absurdity. But one thing, at all events, was very certain: it could not last. Not with the terrific engines of destruction modern science has devised. Some few bets were laid that three or four months at most would see the end of it. They joked a little, with characteristic American levity. Thanksgivings that the United States were out of the struggle were unanimous. The ship with her population of safe, ignorant, careless, prosperous souls figured the entire country this side the Atlantic.

"There's one thing sure: if it lasts any time, it'll put a crimp in the Victorgraph business," one passenger remarked without a very deep-seated pessimism, however. "'Round about Christmas is our heaviest trade."

"I don't see all of you talking-machine people going to the poor-house, though, because of your exports falling off for a little while. We're sure to be neutral, and there are others. It's none of our fuss. Let 'em fight it out till the cows come home; it's nothing to us," another man pointed out.

Somebody else thoughtfully observed that all the same he'd like mighty well to know what happened on the stock-market the day England went in. Levison frankly expressed a complete indifference to the stock-market, even to the war itself, except as the fluctuations of both affected the pockets of his audiences. He was deeply annoyed at the delay and the disarrangement of his plans. "I've got dates with a dozen people on the other side, and they aren't the kind that will stick around and wait for me either. Now I've got to go back home and start all over again on another boat, and this infernal fool of a wireless man won't take a single message for me, no difference what I offer," he lamented disgustedly. Many of the rest sympathized with him; they had engagements equally pressing, and they too had found the wireless man impregnable.

"You should worry, though," one of them said. "If they keep on fighting in Europe, you ought to have a banner season in the show business. With Paris and Monte Carlo shut up there won't be any place for us to go when we want a good time, so we'll all have to spend our money at home. That's where the theatrical managers and movie-men and hotel-keepers go to bat, hey? Am I right?"

"Yeah, but maybe you won't have any money to spend,"

retorted Levison. "If the bottom goes out of everything like that Saint Louis broker — what's-his-name — said it might." However, the others' point of view was cheering. Max was able to return to the poker game — whereat he was a seasoned and astute practitioner — with almost his usual relish. Even if the rest of the country went broke, there was always money in New York, he said to himself; there was the hope of something else in New York, the thought of which set his pulses thumping. She was to give him his answer at the end of this trip, and wasn't this the end of it? Once or twice he felt uneasily that it might not be considered quite sporting to hold her down to the letter of her promise in these circumstances; it was like taking advantage of a technicality. Well, that was what any smart lawyer would do. And anyhow, she was about ready to say yes; she only wanted to be coaxed. His impatience and excitement got a little out of control; he played recklessly, but won, and took it as a good sign, and got rather boisterous and ordered champagne. At Bar Harbor, where the ship put in, he was violently tempted to land and take the express to New York; but with what in later and calmer moments he regarded as his last saving vestige of common-sense, remained on board. It was a feat of self-restraint of which he sometimes boasted. "I didn't have to be nailed down to the deck either. I kept reminding myself that I'd paid three hundred dollars for my passage, and by G——, I meant to get the worth of it! And say, listen, I heard afterwards that lots of 'em that got off, and went down to New York by train, and expected the company would refund some of their money, got fooled!"

He reached home and the newspapers to find that the situation was even more complicated than he and his travelling companions, marooned as they had been on board

ship without benefit of the wireless, had surmised. The Atlantic was rumoured to be alive with German raiders, ready to pounce down on any of their enemies' vessels; that is, on nearly every one in the passenger traffic. Europe was out of the question, for the time, at any rate; Americans over there were scrambling to get away; there was no money to be had; the United States was going to send a cruiser loaded to the gunwales with specie to help out some of the unfortunates. "Charlie'll be camping on the docks waiting for her, with his pockets turned inside out," Levison said to himself with a cynical grin. The younger Rosenberg had gone over earlier in the summer. Levison went up to the office, and received a morose welcome from the other Rosenberg. Nothing doing in cablegrams, it appeared; you had to stand in line, and at the rate they were going it would be three days before you got your message even taken down and filed and then they couldn't tell you when they would be able to transmit it. The other Rosenberg swore fervidly. His concern was not fraternal; Charlie was equal to taking care of himself. Mr. Rosenberg was thinking of unsigned contracts, and opportunities lost—"gone blah," as he tersely put it, adding a few remarks to the general effect that you couldn't hold the public without novelties; he bitterly enumerated some that he had expected to ensnare. Levison cheerfully reminded him of "Sandra"; but Rosenberg senior only turned a cold eye upon him with the statement that he (Levison) made him (Rosenberg) tired, and relapsed into moody silence. Sandra's manager went away with a thoughtful countenance.

He telegraphed her. "*. . . Was coming up today but unexpected business. Got a new scheme for you. Don't worry. See you tomorrow. Yours, Max,*" he wrote, smiling fatuously; and, in fact, telling himself that a man

in love was a good deal of a fool, but he couldn't help it, and the little girl would think it funny if he didn't burn up the road getting to her right off. Of course she knew of his sudden return; she must have seen the papers. She had indeed with a trapped sensation. But honest Max had no slightest suspicion of his lady's actual state of mind; he regarded himself as an engaged man already, and on his arrival at the Catskill cottage only refrained from certain proprietary acts because of the presence of her brother and Miss Schultze, one of whom Sandra contrived to keep constantly by her. The lover took this as a fresh evidence of the aristocratic delicacy which had charmed him from the first, and obliged himself to be content with looking at her in a way which Everett thought it the part of a gentleman not to notice.

"Well, here I am back again!" was Mr. Levison's highly original greeting; he allowed himself to give Sandra's hand a significant pressure, while he nodded at the others. "The little old U. S. looks pretty good to me, too. What d'ye suppose has got into all of 'em over there?" He gave them some account of his three or four days' cruise. "Say, you know it was such a queer experience that I don't mind having had it, even if it was a fierce waste of time, and knocks everything gally-west. It seems the old boat was carrying over a lot of money — real money, I mean, dollars, you know — and that's the reason she put back in such a hurry. They were afraid the Germans would nip it. We didn't know that — they didn't tell the passengers, of course, or we'd all have been worse frightened than we were. They wouldn't have done anything to us, if they had caught us; *we* haven't got anything to do with their war. All the same, it was kind of scare-y. Your friend Thatcher was on board."

"Was he?" said Sandra; her colour flamed and died.

Mary glanced at her, and went on crocheting with calm fingers. There was a letter from Sam which had come in that morning's mail lying on Sandra's desk at the very moment. Miss Schultze's expressionless face did not betray her instantly conceived design of shoving that letter under the lid out of sight as soon as she could slip away. "If he saw it, he might make a fuss, and what's the use?" she thought.

"Yes. He was worrying about business like everybody else. I don't believe in that myself. If a thing falls through, why, don't stand around and hold a wake over it. Start something else!" said Levison briskly. "Take our own case. In uncertain times the show business is the first to feel the bad effects, and gets hit the hardest. Right now you'd think Broadway was —" he made an expressive gesture — "'Ring the bell softly; there's crape on the door!'" he declaimed with burlesque solemnity. "You can't hardly find your way into our office; there's a dense black cloud of gloom in there that used to be Abe Rosenberg! I'm glad I'm home, and say, listen, maybe I didn't do some hustling yesterday! You know I wired you I had a scheme —" and having thus, in a measure, prepared their minds, Sandra's manager proceeded to divulge the result of his observations and activities to his stunned and silent audience. If the war lasted any time, if it went through the winter, say — and it might, there was no telling — he wouldn't be surprised a little bit if "*Hey-Diddle-Diddle*" went on the rocks, and the Marionettes closed up. Anyhow the Rosenbergs wouldn't put any more money into it than they could help. In hard times there wasn't anything in a high-priced show; the cheap ones, the two-a-day and the movies coined money; people want to be amused but not at two dollars and a half a throw. Believe *him*, there would be a lot of Mrs. Fiskes and John

Drews leaving their watches to be regulated this winter! (Here Mr. Levison screwed up one eye with an effect of diabolical significance.) The marrow of all this was that Sandra was to leave the cast of "*Hey-Diddle-Diddle*"; he had made a ten-weeks' engagement for her to dance nightly at "Aladdin's Palace." That was a sure thing anyhow; and by the time the ten weeks were up — "something will happen over in Europe — something decisive's *got* to happen before long; they can't keep it up at this rate. And then we'll all know where we're at," he finished confidently, and looked at Sandra with an indescribable mingling of deference and complacent, vindicated self-assertiveness, feeling that he had demonstrated beyond question the reality and the scope of his power.

He did not suspect how little Sandra was inclined to doubt it; she exaggerated, if anything, telling herself that he had made and could unmake her, and submissively accepting the figures he presently laid before her, as if she had no will or desire of her own in the matter — a marionette indeed!

"It doesn't make any difference where I dance," she said, with a perfunctory glance at the formal phrases in which Alexandra Boardman, designated hereinafter as the party of the first part, did hereby agree with Lewis Schaffner and Co., designated hereinafter as the party of the second part, for and in consideration of the sum of etc., etc. "Do I sign here?"

"Oh, 'Aladdin's Palace' is all right," said Max earnestly. "Schaffner's don't run anything but high-class entertainments. Rosenbergs' don't either," he added with loyalty; "but I didn't want you hiking all over the country on the Circuit; it's killing work, and I couldn't trail along after you — I've got to stay right here with the job. It's funny, in boom times when everything is humming

and you have to increase the office-force and there's a dozen people waiting in the outside room to see you when you get down in the morning, why, you take a day off whenever you feel like it; you loaf around and play pool after lunch, and go to the races or the ball-game, and everybody's happy. And when money's tight, and everybody's scared, and the Street's dead, and you can sit at your desk from morning to night without seeing a soul — why, that's just when you stick to business the hardest. You're afraid to leave the office a second for fear something good'll get by! Say, listen — wait a minute — you don't have to sign. You — you —" he hesitated with an embarrassed yet confidential glance towards the others, and finally ended: "you don't have to do anything you don't want."

"Oh, I'll sign," said Sandra, evading his hand, which visibly lingered at her touch, and seizing hold of the pen rather feverishly.

"She's not quite old enough to retire yet," Everett said with his caressing raillery.

There was an infinitesimal pause while Sandra's pen scratched, and Levison gave her brother an enigmatic, fleeting survey. "She's old enough anyhow to know her own mind. I don't want to put on any pressure," he said, slightly emphasizing the pronoun, and spoke to Sandra again. "You won't have anything to do with the other attractions, of course, any more than you did in '*Bo-Peep*.' I'll be right there."

Behind her back, Mary made some signal which Everett, although they had had no previous understanding, was too well versed in social strategy to let escape him; a moment after she had unostentatiously left the room, he unostentatiously lounged out after her.

"She wanted us to stick around, but he ought to have some show," said the girl in a guarded voice, once they

were both outside; she was moved mainly by certain selfish considerations, but to do her justice in part also by that sympathy with the masculine lover which is natural to women. Everett nodded silently. And though neither one said a word or would have owned to it, both were asking inwardly the same question: what was Sandra going to get out of him for Everett? She would surely get something out of him in return for — for — Very likely they did not name even to themselves the probable terms of the bargain.

The room was still for a second after the door closed. "My God! I thought they never would go!" ejaculated Levison, and laughed nervously and moved nearer to her. "Say, it's — it's all right, little girl?"

"Why — I — yes. Only — not right away, please!"

"I *thought* you'd say that! That's just what I thought you'd say!" said Levison, laughing again, this time in genuine mirth; and in relief and triumph and sheer delight. He boldly put an arm around her, and drew her to him. "'*Not right away!*'" he mimicked her fondly, chuckling. "All right! I'm a pretty good guesser — what? That's the reason I fixed up that engagement with Lew Shaffner."

"I'd like to — to make some more money before — before —" the girl stammered, holding him off. "I feel as if I ought to, you know."

"Sure! You don't want to keep on stage work after we're married. Say, listen, I wouldn't have said a word, but I'd have hated like sin to have my wife on the stage. Like I couldn't support her! I'd have hated it, but if you'd wanted to, you'd never have heard a yip out of me. But — now — when —?"

"And — and Everett — Mr. Levison —?"

"Oh, say Max; can't you, girlie?" He lifted her hand

to his lips — to the shoebrush moustache! “Well, what about Everett? Can’t let business alone, can you?” he asked with facetious patience. “Has he blown? I mean has the movie-man let him go? Huh? Is that it? I suppose Solomons took his address and told him he’d let him know when he might want him again. Hey? Well, can’t all of us be Charlie Chaplins, you know.”

“But can’t you —?”

“My God, yes! I’ll do anything you want, if you’ll just stop talking about everybody but us — *us* — you and me — for a while. Say —!” And here Mr. Levison, still holding Sandra’s pliant, slim body against his side with one arm, unconscious of the kind of latent resistance that animated it, fished in his waistcoat pocket with the free hand. “Let me put it on. Well, I knew it would be too big for you, but you can see what it’s going to look like, anyhow. We can measure your finger with a string, and I’ll take it back to town with me, and have the jeweller cut a piece out, so it’ll fit. Some stone, hey? I got it from a man I know; cost him eight hundred dollars. Well, he’s a gambler, but he was telling me the truth. He knew he couldn’t fool me on diamonds. I only gave him two-fifty — two *hundred* and fifty, I mean, of course. He needed the money. He got off a line of talk about hating to part with it, and only doing it to oblige me, on account of being such friends — I’ve heard all of it before. He finally let it go for two-fifty — meant to all along, I guess. He had to have the money,” said Sandra’s lover — her affianced lover! — not without considerable self-satisfaction. For an instant he held her hand, turning the great glaring ring, which, in fact, was much too large, round and round on her finger. He looked at her with scared, eager eyes, his breath coming short. “Say, listen, let me — let me kiss you? Just once?”

CHAPTER XII

“**H**HEY-DIDDLE-DIDDLE” opened in October with the noise and glitter, the resounding press-notices, and the actual or marvellously simulated warmth of welcome which attended all Marionettes’ openings. Levison, however, sentimentally preoccupied, was far too earnest a business man to “overlook any bets” as he himself said; he spared no effort to make the new piece a success, spite of the gloomy expectations he had voiced to Sandra. Contrariwise also, the Rosenbergs produced it upon as spacious and sumptuous a scale as their other ventures; and the public, forgetting financial woes or seeking distraction from them, continued to crowd the theatre nightly, just as if there were no war and — alas! — as if there never had been any Sandra.

However, none of the journals omitted to note that that popular favourite had gone over to Aladdin’s Palace, and “scored a triumph.” She might not be missed at the Marionettes, but she was vociferously asserted to be an invaluable addition to Aladdin’s staff of “attractions.” She had her own stage-setting, especially designed by — let us say — Mr. Parrishfield Max, with orange-coloured velvet curtains, marble columns, gigantic gilded baskets of fruit, and a background of pine-boughs framing a mystic sunrise — or sunset. There were half a dozen dances, all new, with new costumes, new music, new effects in illumination, new everything except the artist. Levison saw to all that, too; he outdid himself in advertising devices,

perhaps feeling a little on his mettle, ambitious of vindication in the eyes of the Rosenbergs, of Schaffner and Company, of Sandra herself. It is only necessary to call to mind the "Cat-and-the-Fiddle" dance, the (newspaper) rumpus following its first presentation, the (newspaper) claims that it had been lifted bodily from the original scheme of "*Hey-Diddle-Diddle*," the (newspaper) rumours of legal proceedings in consequence, with interviews and photographs and stray anecdotes — I say, it is only necessary to recall this single episode to realize the extent and variety and potency of Mr. Levison's methods. Whatever its intrinsic merit, the "Cat-and-the-Fiddle" had an amazing *succès de curiosité*, filling scores of seats night after night, and bringing the Schaffner management uncounted dollars. "You gotta hand it to Max!" his brothers of the profession observed in cynical admiration.

This was the dance in which Everett appeared, taking the grotesque rôle of the Fiddle; as conceived, it called for certain more or less acrobatic steps and gestures which should have been attractively droll, a kind of humorous complement to Sandra's performance of the Cat. A very moderate supply of intelligence and a light pair of heels would have sufficed, one would think; but Everett, though of course he possessed much more than the above qualifications, was not conspicuously successful in the part. It bored him; he said that it was clowning, not dancing, which, perhaps, was correct; and he went through it with a slow and monotonous elegance which would have blighted the entire act, had it not been for Levison's ingenious efforts, and for Sandra herself. She frisked about in a furry costume with a bell and ribbon around her neck, and a cap finished off with little ears which the women in the audience — who were always in a great majority, being her most fervent admirers — voted altogether *cute*

and *darling*. Everett was negligible, and probably preferred to be so.

"He's a wonder!" Levison said sardonically. "I could step around here to the Marionettes or the Twentieth Century Review and shut my eyes and pick a dozen fellows out of the chorus that could make that Fiddle part the biggest hit this season. There ought to be a barrel of money in it. He don't hurt the act to speak of; she's the whole thing anyhow, and most people think she won't have anybody but a — a cheese dancing opposite her, so she can grab all the applause. They think it's good business. But I hate to see a good chance going to waste. Oh, well, what's the use?" And in the same philosophic spirit he refrained from advising or directing the young man, except in the matter of a change of name which he declared to be imperatively necessary.

"'Everett,' you know, it's a fine name all right, but it won't go on the stage," he said firmly. "It's — well — it's too fluffy somehow, if you don't mind my saying so. They stick names like that onto all the simp-parts in the movie-plays. It's got so that every time the crowd sees a name like Everett or Percival or Montmorency, they think there's a laugh coming. You'll have to call yourself something else. Sorry."

"No occasion for apologies, Mr. Levison," said the other. "My name won't suffer by being — er — kept out of it. How about Johnson? Is that ordinary enough not to raise a laugh?"

"Yes, that's the idea. Johnson — Jackson — anything on that order will do for you," Levison agreed with an innocent readiness which it may be Everett misinterpreted, for he reddened, glancing suspiciously. There was nothing at which one could take offence in the manager's cheerful and indifferent countenance, however; so

young Mr. Everett Chase Boardman swallowed his annoyance and became, not Johnson indeed, but Mr. Chase Trever, without provoking any comment.

"Little Everett is too wise to start anything with me," Levison said afterwards with a species of good-humoured sneer. "Why, I'm his meal-ticket!"

In truth, that fact was perfectly apparent not only to Everett but to the entire professional circle at the Palace. They viewed him leniently, understanding the footing he occupied and too used to the spectacle of graceful, useless appendages to wonder at or condemn him. Not a few took it for granted that he was Sandra's husband; but, upon hearing that he was her brother, evinced only a languid surprise. If Levison "stood for" him, if the Schaffner management "stood for" him, it was no affair of theirs. As for Sandra, she endeavoured with intermittent success, not to think about Everett's position at all, and about her own as little as possible. The girl achieved a degree of callousness by working desperately hard, with results on the whole satisfactory even to her exacting conscience. The work proved such a refuge she went at it with an abandon which heretofore she had somewhat lacked or deliberately held in check. It surprised Levison and moreover moved him to an enthusiasm as much commercial as sentimental.

"We sure have to take that honeymoon trip to the other side this spring, little girl, war or no war. I'd like to have 'em see you. What do you know about that?" he said, amused at his own inconsistencies. "Not to Paris, of course. I wouldn't go on the continent with you, even to the places where there isn't any fighting, like Spain or Italy. There wouldn't be any danger, but we'd be likely to have trouble getting around. No, I may have to run over myself, but I wouldn't take my wife any

such trip. You can stay in London and have a good time. I've been getting word from 'em, and they all say the shows are running full blast, and to come along with whatever I've got. Mrs. Claude's over there 'creating a furore,' as the press-agent lad says. You could give her cards and spades. I'm beginning to feel as if I'd like to show 'em a *real* dancer."

And so on endlessly, Sandra sitting by in assenting silence. She had never said in so many words that she would marry him in the spring, but that had somehow come to be the understanding.

"You aren't just rolling me along, now, honey?" Levi-son once demanded in sudden suspicion. "You wouldn't treat a man like that?" And Sandra reassured him, wondering at herself. She had thought Everett's counsel to temporize contemptible, but what else was she doing?

Meanwhile the war went on with a succession of grisly surprises. The *Emden* was sunk; Louvain sacked; the English coast-towns fired on; Antwerp fell; winter set in with Poe-like tales from the trenches. Relief-work for the war-stricken countries began. All kinds of committees organized all kinds of entertainments to which all kinds of people were besought to contribute their services in the name of mercy. Sandra presently found herself, as in old days, appearing with other professionals and many ambitious amateurs in charity vaudeilles and charity pageants in the studios or private houses of celebrities, at theatres, here, there and everywhere. There were the hordes of girls and young men, headlong, heedless, calling one another by nicknames, exchanging shibboleth only comprehended by themselves; there were the mothers wearily and heroically gracious, well-preserved, beautifully dressed; there were the unobtrusive fathers, not too sanguine of aspect, congregating together in the background

to compare notes about taxes, the price of raw materials, the orders they could not get, the other orders they could not fill; there were the hired musical directors, the hired stage-mechanics bored beyond belief, yet assiduous. All was exactly as she had been accustomed to it five years back — ten years back — her whole life. The very manner towards herself of mingled envy and curiosity and distrust and scrupulous politeness recalled her own startlingly. Just so had she thought and talked and acted. She would overhear them sibilant in groups, with a wary eye cocked in her direction. "She's not any taller than I am. I stood right beside her —" "*Thin!* Do you suppose it's dancing does it?" "I wonder if she ever gives lessons —" "I heard —" "Oh, no, Nannie; she's perfectly decent. Father says so. Mother made him make inquiries, and men always *know* —" "Yes, but they don't always tell you —" "Married?" "Did you see those furs she had on yesterday?" — "Why, she speaks English perfectly —" "Tom Harris says we ought to have got Maizie de Forest, that one that's dancing at the Roof. He says she's ever so much better than this one and besides she's new. Everybody's seen this one over and over again —"

Sandra moved away, contriving to look as if she had heard nothing with a skill which should have testified to a long course of social training, had any of them been observant enough to remark it. But nobody did; it never occurred to a single one of these honest young folks that she could be a gentlewoman; the fact would go to show that gentility is not so unmistakable as Mrs. Richard Boardman, for instance, would have contended. By turns, Sandra resented her isolation or was glad of it, or pitied herself, or merely laughed. There were times when it seemed to her fantastically that they were the

show, these people; they were the real performers, mountebanks, and she the audience.

All this winter she did not see Sam, which was odd, as New York being headquarters for the business he was constantly dodging in and out of town and heretofore had not once failed to come or telephone. Neither did he write. Sandra was frightened to find out how much she missed him, how much she feared that he had heard the only piece of news which could keep him away. The dismal certainty that he had was gradually forcing itself upon her some while before Mary casually mentioned one day having met Mr. Thatcher. "He wanted to be remembered to you, and said he sent you both his best wishes," said Mary.

"Best wishes," Sandra repeated mechanically. Then she collected herself with an effort. "How did he know?" she asked.

"Why, I told him, of course. But he'd heard something already, because he asked the minute he saw me. Just think! He's been over there again. He went to England and then he went to Russia. He says he's going again this spring. I said: 'Oh, Mr. Thatcher, I should think you'd be afraid. Being on the ocean is bad enough anyhow, and now they're saying they're going to go after all the ships they think have arms and things for the Allies on them and *any* ship might have.' He said he guessed that was all blow. "'Well,'" I says, "'Just the same they're warning people not to go over.'" I thought that was pretty fair of the Germans. Of course they don't really want to hurt people that aren't trying to hurt them. But Mr. Thatcher just looked sort of square-jawed, that way he does sometimes, and said he didn't think warning innocent people that were minding their own business justified murdering 'em if they didn't take the warning. He said the Black Hand warned people. And then he

says: "‘Anyhow,’" he says, "‘Seems to me I’d be a pretty poor citizen if I took orders from any government but my own!’" Isn't that just like him, though? Well, there're always two sides to every question," Mary summed up.

"You didn't need to have told him," said Sandra.

"Told him what? Oh, about you and Mr. Levison. Why, it isn't any secret," said Mary, with wide-open eyes.

"No, but — something might happen —"

"Something might happen?" Mary echoed; after an instant, she began to laugh in a knowing fashion, "Oh, I *see!*"

"No, you don't — you don't see at all," cried out Sandra vehemently. "Of course I *am* going to marry Mr. Levison. I'm not just — I mean I haven't the least idea of — of anything else. I — I — it's not the way you think at all —" she kept on protesting, conscious that this very insistence was a betrayal, fairly hating Mary for her ready acquiescence, her ingenuous disclaimers, her amused, admiring, unconvinced eyes.

The news of the British naval victory off the Falkland Islands came as a distinct relief to numbers of worthy persons interested in the shipping and allied industries all over the United States. By that time the entire community was divided into two camps, pro-Allies and pro-German; friendships were undergoing a severe strain, but business relations continued comparatively undisturbed; and most people agreed that to have the seas swept free of raiders and of a fleet of warships with which a chance encounter would certainly prove exceedingly inconvenient to any merchantman, was on the whole, reassuring, no matter with which party you sided. Ocean-travel was safe now, one said to another; not that a man would let his wife and daughters go to Europe for the summer as here-

tofore, of course; there would be no fun in going nowadays, anyhow; but running across on a business trip was no longer a serious risk, and business was showing signs of vitality at last after six moribund months. If there was a dark significance about the fact that the revival was earliest and strongest among the munitions and army-supplies trades, it went unnoticed by common consent. To most minds the United States had neither part nor lot in the struggle; our dearest wish was to keep out of it; but since it was going to go on with or without us, what harm in profiting by it? The war was horrible, the cases of Belgium, of Servia, of Poland (though probably reports were grossly exaggerated), were horrible, but we were doing what we could for the sufferers, and we ourselves were incredibly safe and presently would be incredibly prosperous.

Mr. Max Levison was one of the heartiest subscribers to the above opinions; for that matter he had never been disposed to trouble his head much over the rights and wrongs of the quarrel, and would agree with the last man who talked about it rather than take time to argue. "Nobody really knows what the mix-up is about; but they all want to tell me," he would say with a grin. "I'm the only real neutral there is."

"Maybe that's because you haven't any real country, Mr. Levison," Everett Boardman once suggested. Everett, as was becoming and natural to one of his name and lineage, championed the cause of the Allies at the beginning, and could plead it very convincingly, keeping himself well-informed and marshalling his dates and facts, which were always accurate, with no little skill.

"Hey? What d'ye mean, 'no real country'?" demanded Levison, astonished. "I'm just as good United States as anybody — *oh!*" his face changed slightly, but

it was without resentment that he added: "I get you. Well, I guess that's so, only I never thought of it that way before. My father came from somewhere over there, Bohemia or some place like that — I never did know just where; he probably didn't like it any too well, or he'd have talked about it more. I was born over here, though, and you bet I'm glad of it! Sometimes they start something about all the Jewish people going back to Palestine where they came from originally — funny idea!" He wagged his head. "Me for Broadway!"

He had renewed Sandra's engagement at the *Palace* to run till the first of March. Then, if they sailed in April, she would have a month in which to — "rest up a little and get some things, and — go out to see your folks, you know," he said tentatively. The truth was, honest Max took it for granted that it was the part, in fact the prerogative, of the bride to make all these decisions and arrangements; most of the grooms he had ever had to do with needed only to buy a license and a ring. He would have liked Sandra to show more excitement and more desire to have her own way; but set her attitude down to the teachings of the refined circles to which she belonged, where, he understood, a supreme self-control was manifested by everybody under all circumstances. "You — I hope you haven't got any plan about a big wedding in your home town?" he inquired with a trepidation that was only half burlesque. "Bridesmaids and pearl stick-pins for me to give the ushers and — shower-bouquets and all that stuff like in the society papers?"

"Mercy, no!" said Sandra aghast; then giving way to hysterical laughter. She checked herself in fear of his divining why she was horrified and why amused. "I hate all that fuss and always have," she explained hastily and untruthfully. "I've been bridesmaid two or three times

and it's always the same old thing and tiresome as can be."

"Well, a society-girl like you — you know all about it. I thought maybe that was what you wanted," said Levison, taking obvious pride and pleasure in the statement. "Far as I'm concerned, any justice of the peace right here —"

"Oh, I don't think — I wouldn't feel — it wouldn't seem like being married at all," said Sandra, shrinking. She had not been inside a church for two or three years, and her beliefs were too vague to deserve the name; yet the idea of marriage otherwise than by the Episcopal ritual inexpressibly repelled her.

"All right, all right, just as you say!" said Levison, still more pleased. "You're the one to decide. Only you aren't a Roman Catholic, are you? Episcopalian, hey? I thought they were pretty much the same thing. They've got Episcopal churches all over and a minister for every one, of course. Got any preference? I'll put his name down."

He had out notebook and pencil on the instant, as usual, but Sandra, realizing wretchedly that with another word she would be cornered, played a desperate card.

"Oh, but I thought — that is, I was planning something else. I thought it would be so nice to have it over there — in London — in one of those English churches. It would be so different, you know —"

Levison's features expressed not so much disappointment as stark surprise; he opened his mouth to hint at certain obstacles which even his not highly conventional training caused him to recognize, but Sandra forestalled him.

"Everett wants to go, and I meant to take Mary anyhow. I wouldn't want to stay anywhere all by myself while you were off on business," she said with feverish glibness. "Don't you think it would be — would be interesting?"

Notwithstanding sundry other emotions confused and inharmonious but none of them in the least approaching amusement, Levison laughed at that last word. "*Interesting*! You can't beat that! It sounds like a line out of one of those old comic-operas Gilbert and Sullivan used to get up. Say, listen, what's your idea of a honeymoon, anyhow? I was thinking it would be kind of 'interesting' to go over us two all to ourselves. Of course, little Miss Schultze is about like a chair or a steamer-rug. She wouldn't be in the way, but your brother —"

"She won't go a step unless he does."

"Well, let 'em both stay at home, then!" said Levison roundly. "Let's us be married right here. Come on! I can't imagine what put that London bug into your head. Come on! We'd have lots of fun going over," he pleaded.

"No, we wouldn't! Everybody would know we were a bride and groom, and it would be awful anyhow. You don't *know*. I'm — a perfectly wretched sailor. If it should happen to be the least bit rough — that's one reason I wanted to have Mary —" Sandra was urging, when she saw the discontent and impatience of her lover's face dissolve in laughter that was whole-hearted enough this time.

"Oh, I see! Well, it's not very becoming. I'm never sick a minute myself — eat like a shark," he asserted with the pride all such hardy voyagers invariably take in the statement. "I bob right up when there's nobody in the dining-room but me, and even the stewards look green around the gills. Say, it is funny; you can't help laughing to save your life."

"I'd hate it!" said Sandra with vehemence.

"Sure! But we'll take the biggest and fastest boat we can get. You get over in five days, and you don't feel the motion at all hardly. I mean one of the palm-room,

Ritz service, seven-deck, dress-suit-every-evening kind. You'd like *that* —"

Sandra stood firm, however, exhibiting for the first time the sweet petulance and unreasonableness and obstinacy which, in his heart, poor Levison yearned for. "You just boss me around like a slave. I see my finish after we're married," he sighed delightedly. "All right! Have it your own way! Don't want to take over any more of the family and a friend or two, do you? Well, I didn't know — thought you might. With seventeen trunks and the dog and Everett and little Mary and me, a few more wouldn't make much difference. The procession will be five hours passing a given point anyhow. There's one thing; it won't be anything new to the steamship company. They're used to all the Metropolitan stars and the other big foreign artists travelling around with just such a string. Most of the tenors and the prima-donna ladies manage to slip something about it to the papers, too. That's not such a bad idea, either," he ended meditatively.

And accordingly Sandra was not surprised to read a few days later that "the famous little dancer, at the conclusion of her season at Aladdin's Palace (the new Schaffner enterprise) would sail for England with her own company. She was under contract to dance at the Metropolitan Arcade," etc. Nothing was said about what else was to happen. "You don't want the public ever to get wind of anything of that kind. You want to keep 'em guessing — they like to guess and to get up stories," Levison said. "But on the whole they'd rather a stage favourite wasn't married — particularly a dancer. Queer thing, but it's so. You're not intending to stay on the stage, but a person never can tell."

CHAPTER XIII

SANDRA went home in March, following out Levison's program — Levison, of whom she could not bring herself to say a word during the entire week of her stay! Everett must have kept silence, too, though there had been no open agreement between the brother and sister; the family knew nothing about the engagement. Sandra's mother met her at the train and took her out to the house in the smart little electric brougham the girl herself had given them. They were tremendously excited over the visit, fonder and prouder of her than ever, but with a strange note in the fondness and pride, a kind of deference that was infinitely pathetic. The older people were a little afraid of her, anxious about her likes and dislikes, expectant of some "temperamental" outbursts. They asked naïve questions like children, and observed small, heart-breaking formalities which they never would have dreamed of, had she been merely their daughter, instead of "Sandra" who was known all over the country, who made fabulous sums a year, whose dances, "Will-o'-th'-Wisp," "Tarantelle," "Pierrette" were imitated and parodied right and left, who — for a climax! — had set a fashion of hair-dressing, and had an out of the way shade of tawny yellow named after her. These things amount to fame, for most of us, and fame, somehow or other, is not expected to be sociable or domestic.

"Yes, I was going to give a little tea for her," Mrs. Richard explained; "but people in her position — they get so much of that sort of thing, you know — they're

being lion-hunted continually. I decided not to, after Sandra told me she just wanted a little quiet time here at home with ourselves and some of her oldest friends, to say good-bye before she sails. Oh, of course she will be delighted to see *you*, but don't bring anybody else, and don't say anything to her about her dancing or her career. Everybody always begins at once on that, and I suppose they — I mean artists like Sandra — get really bored to death with it."

However, there was a good deal of entertaining; small dinners, and Mr. Donelson Meigs gave one of his delightful studio parties. No dances, of course. "None of the men would have the nerve to ask you even for a one-step! And anyhow I should think the best kind of vacation you could have would be not to hear a single bar of dance-music the whole time you're here," one uncommonly outspoken friend ventured to tell her. Sandra's set of debutantes was all broken up, married, scattered. A dozen sets had come along since then, to whom she was simply a celebrity, not Alexandra Boardman. She moved amongst them, here in this place which had been her home, still isolated within her charmed circle of footlights, grease-paint, publicity, like as she thought, recalling some old fairy-tale, the princess enchanted in the crystal box; or, she had another and weirder fancy, as if she were dead, and in an impossible detachment, witnessing her own immortality. Sometimes she had to answer inquiries about Everett, but not often. Sandra knew why; she knew that all these people were commiserating her father and mother behind their backs for having such a son as Everett — such a disappointment! Society, including her own family, had grown reconciled to her being on the stage, and no longer felt it beneath a Boardman. There is no occupation — hardly even a dishonest occupation

— that may not be dignified by success. But Everett was no more successful at dancing than at anything else; nobody imitated *him*; nobody ever read his name on a billboard. He was doing exactly what she did; but obscurely, therefore unbecomingly. It was kindest, most tactful, not to mention him! If they only knew it, the root of the matter was that there had never been any Max Levison for Everett, Sandra thought sardonically. And yet there were moments when she told herself that she would have come to her own in time, without Levison; it would have taken longer, there would have been less tinsel and trumpeting about it, but she *knew* she could dance. At least she would not finally have got into this miserable entanglement, from which yet she lacked the strength or spirit to break away.

She went back to New York, to days of shopping and packing and scurrying to and fro. Levison haunted the apartment, rushing in at all hours, excited and foolish as a boy, bringing her presents, fur-lined slippers, the latest, most complete and costly camera devised, a dressing-case of royal-purple crushed leather, scented, brocade-lined, fitted with a squad of gold-topped bottles—"solid gold" he told her impressively—new-fangled folding umbrellas and hat-boxes, innumerable fripperies. He was so eager, so buoyant, so happy himself and so sure that she was happy, that the spectacle of him shamed Sandra to the very soul. She showed the things to Everett experimentally. Her brother, who also was quite busy providing himself with little niceties in the purchase of which he exercised the finest taste and discrimination, surveyed Levison's offerings with a faint displeasure.

"He ought to know better than to crowd all those expensive things on you, San. It's not good style. And

you can't accept them anyhow — at least, I don't suppose you will. It's funny that after all this while he doesn't realize what sort of a girl you are. Why don't you drop him a gentle hint? Or tell him outright that that kind of thing isn't done among nice people."

"But if we're engaged —?" said Sandra.

Everett gave her a humorous oblique glance. "To be sure," said he drily. "Something might happen, though. It would save lots of trouble, according to what I've heard about such cases, to send 'em back now, instead of later."

"Nothing that I can think of is going to happen to keep us from being married," said Sandra with deliberation.

Everett looked startled for a second, then he smiled. "'Aw, g'wan!" he said, quoting a Hey-Diddle-Diddle comedian who had made one of the hits of the season merely by the frequent enunciation of this simple phrase.

It was a raw spring day when they sailed. Levison came around to the apartment in the morning and took Sandra off, leaving the others to follow in a taxi with the dog and most of the hand-baggage, like the crew of retainers they resembled. It was an arrangement which Everett may not have greatly fancied, but his manners were much too good to permit of his openly avoiding it, or making the semi-facetious, semi-malicious comments which undoubtedly occurred to him. He handed Mary and the poodle into the cab and took his place beside them with the air of doing the thing of his choice which he knew so well how to assume. There was no acting on Mary's side; she was always timorously happy to be with him, and not even Pixy himself — who also loved and admired Everett with the whole strength of his canine heart — demanded less in return, or showed a more un-

selfish devotion. Mary took care not to be so demonstrative as Pixy, however; she had found out that the hero did not like it.

At the pier there was almost as much of a crowd, both of travellers and of stay-at-homes, as there would have been in past days before anybody was dreaming of war. Passengers went down and found their quarters, and deposited their luggage and tipped the porters, and read the little notices stuck up alongside the mirrors directing the occupant of that stateroom to lifeboat number so-and-so, and thought of the *Titanic*, it may be with a slight thrill. But there were never going to be any more awful ocean tragedies like that, they reflected; steamship captains were too careful nowadays, since that lesson. In the smoking-room that evening Everett told Levison with a laugh that a man had come up to him on the dock, as they were all crowding into line to go on board, and warned him mysteriously "like the second assistant villain in a melodrama" not to sail.

"Somebody did that to me, too," another passenger said, overhearing him.

"Is that so? None of 'em took the pains to tip *me* off," said Levison, in mock indignation. "There's been a serious oversight. I'll have to notify the management. They've been warning the government too, I understand. Say, that's a great bluff!" And the word putting him in mind of a favourite recreation, he proposed it to an acquaintance or two whom he had already run into on board. He was a familiar figure on the decks of Atlantic liners, as in the theatrical and sporting societies of half a dozen foreign cities, and was likely to happen upon somebody he knew in almost any quarter of the globe. "First thing I do usually, crossing, is to start a game, poker, auction, whatever I can get up. There's nothing like it

for passing the time. Only I guess I won't have so much trouble that way this trip," he said to Sandra with sentimental significance.

So, although Mr. Levison by no means neglected his card-table, he spent the better part of the days with Sandra whenever she was visible, fetching and carrying, bribing the stewards magnificently in her presence to do this or that which he fancied she wanted or needed done, cuddling her into her wraps and taking her to walk outside, active, officious and lover-like to a terrifying degree. Sandra submitted lifelessly, thankful that, at least, her privacy was not invaded by fellow-passengers, though occasionally they stared and whispered together when she appeared. In twenty-four hours it was known on board who was the slim, foreign-looking woman with the big black eyes who had one of the extravagant suites with a dog and a valet and a maid — thus Everett and Mary figured! — and was to be seen in the rare sunshiny hours, buried in furs, promenading with the unquestionably Israelitish manager, agent, impresario, whatever you chose to call him, who was taking her over; there was always somebody like that in charge of those people. Presumably, if they were not thus policed, they might get temperamental and bite a purser's ear off, or smash up the cabin furniture! Sandra was used to stares and murmurings, which had long ceased to annoy her; for that matter she had never been at all self-conscious. She was reported to have a most gracious and charming manner by the few who, adventuring greatly, spoke to her — a young girl who asked shyly for an autograph, a lady with a little boy who stopped to pat the poodle, a Pittsburgh steel millionaire going over to close a contract with the British government; Sandra had danced at a Belgian Relief entertainment given at his house early in the winter. He told her there

was "quite a — er — a galaxy, as you might say, of talent on board. Yourself, to begin with, and then there's So-and-So, and Such-a-One," he named them, winding up with: "Plenty of jobs in London for all of you gifted people. Seems they're crazy for entertainment more than ever before, and no wonder! They see enough of the serious side of things in all conscience. Must have *some* relaxation."

And Levison coming up at this point, the steel man who knew who he was, uttered a brief greeting, and got up and walked off; he would just as lief be seen talking to "Sandra," but probably had no great relish for her manager's company except over a poker-hand and maybe a Scotch-and-soda. "Told you it would be just as comfortable as the Biltmore, now didn't I?" said Levison jubilantly, taking the seat the other vacated. "Say, this is the boat for me! Easiest crossing I ever made. We struck some pretty heavy seas last night, and did you notice how little she rolled? None of that swooping downwards, and raising the screws out of water, so that they fairly shake the teeth out of your head. How's things, anyhow? Stewards treating you all right?"

"Everybody is as nice as can be," Sandra told him quickly.

"Yeah, I expect they are. I've got 'em all fixed," said Levison in a shrewd and competent style.

"I think they'd be nice anyhow. They're all so English, aren't they? That little man with the crooked nose — have you seen him? He's the one that comes with my bouillon every morning — such a nice, funny little man. And such an English accent! 'Round the Kipe — the Kipe of Good 'Ope, mem, that's where you get the followin' seas,' he told me. And the other day when I asked him what it was like outside, he said it was 'a bit

izy.' I had to think awhile before it dawned on me that he meant *hazy*, of course."

"'Izy?' Oh, yes, hazy — ha-ha!" said Levison laughing a little absently, as he gazed at her momentarily animated face. "Lots of fun your first trip over always. Everything's so new. After a while, it gets to be an old story — but we're always going to have a good time, aren't we, hey?" he said, and added tenderly under his breath, "Sweetheart!"

Mary Schultze and Everett, meanwhile, enjoyed themselves with considerably more freedom, having, as Everett pointed out with much good humour, the advantages of their unimportance. "*We* aren't anybody!" the young fellow said. "Nobody's afraid to speak to *us*. We can fraternize with the cook's galley — whatever that is, they always had 'em on board ships, even pirate-ships, in those bloodthirsty sea-yarns I used to read when I was a boy. We can be just as low-down and sociable as we choose. And where are the diabolical card-sharks we've heard so much about as infesting the big liners? No one's tried to gamble my money out of me, so far. Maybe they know I haven't got any!" He had turned out a dependable sailor, suffering no qualms even when the sea was most trying, was in the highest spirits and made the best travelling-companion imaginable.

It was one day when the fog had been so heavy that the electric lights were burning all over the ship — as indeed was not unusual — that Sandra came out of the cabin with all her wraps to take one of those turns in the open air which Levison insisted were so beneficial; in reality he was not so solicitous about her health, which had never undergone a day's set-back all the time he had known her, as desirous of tucking her arm under his, and walking up and down in that blissful contact, "having her all to him-

self" as he put it. Sandra went through the lounge, meeting Mary likewise clad for the outside, but hurrying in the opposite direction.

"It isn't so bad out — just raw. I'm going to get poor little Pix. He does love to go out so, and I couldn't take him yesterday. I'll put his blanket on," she called out hastily in explanation, as they passed, and went on down the corridor. Sandra never saw her again.

Levison in his fur-lined and befrogged overcoat was waiting for her at the double-doors. A penetrating buffet of cold air struck them, emerging. "We must be in the Gulf Stream," Levison said jocularly. Everett, standing near, muffled to the eyes, with the glowing end of a cigar protruding from some point within his defences, laughed and repeated the famous old version of a famous old line: "'Sprig, jeddle Sprig, ethereal bildness, cub!'" mimicking with his native skill, a bad cold in the head. And just then, as they were all standing, they felt a shock.

It made Sandra stumble forward and back, and she had to clutch Levison's arm, who himself grasped at a handhold; some of the others lost their footing and went sliding and floundering with the deck-chairs; and they heard some sort of heavy noise; and the motion of the ship ceased with a kind of lingering heave.

Sandra said: "Oh, we've struck something!"

A very tall man near by said: "No, it struck us. They've done it after all!"

"Not the Germans? Do you think it was a torpedo?" said Levison.

The tall man said yes. Then he said, "Yes, sure it was a torpedo!" And then he added, looking vaguely around, "What do you suppose made 'em think that was a smart thing to do?"

There began to be a movement, trampling and noises,

and suddenly they were in a crowd. Sandra felt Levison pushing her along. The deck was at a difficult slant beneath her feet; it was like walking sideways across the face of a hill. She saw men very thick and busy about a certain place, but there were too many people between for her to make out clearly what was being done. She asked Levison: "Are we badly hurt? Is there any danger? Let's ask somebody."

One of the ship's officers who seemed to be stationed at the point they were just passing heard and answered her. "Oh, no, ma'am, no trouble at all. Only it's orders passengers must get into the boats." He raised his voice and repeated the speech to others coming behind. "No trouble! No danger! Just move up, please!" He was a young fellow, with a high English colour which did not fade, nor did his hearty and reassuring voice falter. "That's it, step along, please! No, we'll be delayed a little, that's all!"

A man beside Sandra jostled her involuntarily, and said, "Oh, pardon me!" The movement of the crowd had halted abruptly, throwing him against her. In a second they began to press forward again; there was very little confusion, however, not so much as in an ordinary crowd of excursionists; numbers of men were standing disengaged from the current of people, against the rail, or the bulkheads, not doing anything, merely looking on, as it seemed; some of them smoked. There were faces at the windows of the saloons and staterooms. Sandra saw her brother who, she thought was immediately back of her, among those detached men on the outskirts; she saw him bearing back, flattening himself, to let some one get by him. She cried out: "Everett, where's Mary? Have you seen Mary?"

He waved his hand at her and smiled, and called back:

"It's all right! I'll get her!" Just at the instant, a woman came up to him with a life-belt in her hands, and said urgently: "Oh, sir, could you please tell me how to put this on?"

Everett took it from her with his habitual slight courteous gesture, and began to adjust it on her methodically, with intent eyes, frowning a little over some fastening. The crowd, intervening, shut him from Sandra's vision. She tugged at Levison's arm, and said: "Everett's there — right over there! He's going for Mary. Don't you want to wait for them? Let's wait!"

"Come on!" said Levison hoarsely, pulling her. The deck shifted again under their feet; it settled a little.

They reached the busy spot, which, as she now saw, was at the foot of an improvised gangway where some of the ship's officers were gathered, passing people to a lifeboat. The officer farther away could still be heard reiterating his: "No danger! Just move on, please!"

Levison all at once began to speak to Sandra in a hurried undertone: "Where's your money? Where's all your jewellery and stuff? Where d'you keep it? Is it on you?"

"In the cabin," said Sandra, startled. "Why? Shall I go and get it?"

"No, no!" He grasped her arm violently. "What are you thinking about? The lights are all out anyhow. Here!" He made some abortive gesture towards his own garments, but as suddenly abandoned whatever purpose he had with a grunt of impatience. "Pshaw! It's all in my belt underneath everything. I couldn't get at it in a thousand years — Here!" He crowded something into her hand, fairly closing her surprised and slow fingers over it. "Get hold of it, put it away! Haven't you got a pocket? Women never have any pockets!"

Sandra held it mechanically. Levison said something

else as confused and incomprehensible as his other words, but this last she did not even catch. She found herself on the gang-plank with the man who had jostled her. An officer was saying to him civilly: "Step back, please, sir. Men's turn comes after the ladies."

"I know, I know!" said the man; "don't you see I just want to pass my little boy to my wife? That's her!" He had a child in his arms, to be sure, as Sandra now saw, a stout little two-year-old in a red worsted knitted cap, staring with round eyes over his father's shoulder. They handed him over like a bundle.

She was in the lifeboat, almost the last one. Somebody shouted orders; the boat seemed to totter giddily in the air for an instant, but there was no sensation of being lowered; instead, it was as if the water rushed up to the keel with a staggering impact. The sea which had looked smooth enough from the ship, was a huddle of marching waves amongst whose great shoulders the boat rolled and recovered balance and rolled again with a hideous indecision. All the while the men — there were not more than half a dozen all told — shouted at one another from bow to stern, and bent to the sweeps frantically. Some one shrieked out: "Oh, it's falling over on us! Look, it's falling over on us!" In fact, looking upward from the water's level, the enormous hull, by some illusion of the eye, seemed to beetle above them threateningly; but this only endured momentarily, departing as the distance widened. So towering was the ship's bulk that already faces and figures were indistinguishable overhead, and the farther end of her was lost in stealing fog. On a sudden, with the realization of this size and of the life that populated it, there descended upon the lifeboat a terrible and pitiless illumination. One of the women struggled to her feet, with arms outstretched and screamed "John! John!"

in a wild voice. They pulled her down. Sandra, with incredible effort, articulated a question to the man at the oar nearest her: "Will there be room for everybody? There will be room for everybody?"

"Oh, plenty of room, yes, ma'am. Plenty of room," he answered her automatically, straining with the rest to keep their toy-like craft head on to the seas; with all their endeavour, water slapped over the gunwales from time to time. Sandra sat with the other women in an unthinking blankness of mind, staring at the ship as they receded. No one spoke, yet the boat was full of dreadful sounds like those of animals in agony. Presently Sandra, upon some boding impulse, bent over hiding her face on her knees, and covering up her eyes and ears in the thick folds of her clothing. While she crouched, a longer wave lifted the boat; and there was a kind of wail. After what seemed to her a long, long while, she lifted her head but without looking anywhere, and spoke to the man again, with the same slow and painful labour.

"It's gone? The ship's gone?"

"Yes, ma'am," he said. He kept on rowing.

There was another long, long while. Then she screamed, clawing at his arm and pointing: "Stop, stop! Can't you see? Stop! Make the others stop!"

It swept down the waves towards them, within an oar's length, but they did not stop. "Oh, my Gawd, ma'am, it's gone! It's dead and drowned. The pore little thing's dead and drowned, and the hother one 'as it's 'ead bashed in — struck a davitt, likely, goin' over, or somethink. 'Tain't no use stoppin'," said the man.

Sandra had not seen that there was another one. She crouched together, hiding her face again. It was bitterly cold. After an interval of hours, or perhaps minutes, she could not have told, Sandra felt rather than heard the

man speaking to her urgently. Rousing herself enough to look upon him, she saw it was some one she knew; and then, with the emotionless acquiescence of a dream, recognized the little steward with the crooked nose. He spoke again, contorting his features out of habit into something which would have been his ordinary civil smile.

"Beg parding, ma'am, d'ye think you could bail a little? She's takin' in fast. If you could manage to bail a little —?"

She became aware that he was trying to put something into her hand, a can, a dipper or what-not, and mutely opening her fingers to receive it, found that there was already something in them. She looked down. It was Levison's watch and chain which he had thrust into her hands at that last moment.

"Won't you try to bail, ma'am? Thank you," said the steward.

Sandra bailed; the icy cold water washing to and fro in the bottom of the boat was above her ankles. She scooped at it with her thimble measure for hours and hours — or again, only minutes, she never knew. Sometimes she wondered how it was that her feet could be at once numb and exquisitely painful; sometimes she watched the slow, stiff and regular movements of her own hands with a distant curiosity; they seemed to work independently of her. She did not think at all — not even of Mary, not even of Levison at the bottom of the sea, or of Everett whose body was washed up on shore, hard by the Old Head of Kinsale three days later.

CHAPTER XIV

SAM THATCHER, sitting in the lounge of the little old-fashioned hotel on Trafalgar Square where he always stayed during his London visits, read the newspaper accounts of the disaster with the astounded and at first unbelieving horror felt by untold thousands of his countrymen. The mind rebelled against it, as earlier it had rebelled against the tales from Belgium and northern France. In the twentieth century, among civilized people, such things were impossible; nobody would conceive them, nobody could be found to carry them out. All the stories were sensational rubbish; newspapers must talk, must publish something, must live in short. But now —! “Why, it was all true! Every one of the sickening, diabolical details was true!” Sam thought. “It was deliberately planned and executed in cold blood — like this. I can believe anything of them now.”

He read the lists of victims over and over, vaguely hoping to find some mistake of his own or the reporters'. He knew others of the passengers besides Sandra. She appeared two or three times, as Miss A. Boardman on the ship's register in one column, in another as Mademoiselle Sandra, elsewhere in brief paragraphs referring to her professional celebrity. She was among the handful of survivors at the hospital, all of them in a critical condition; some picked up in her boat and others, or clinging to rafts and wreckage had since died. Bodies were being recovered daily. There were notices of Levison — “A familiar figure in the Rialto, a park in New York much

frequented by the theatrical fraternity," the English paper said; the description might have made Sam smile at another time. Everett Boardman had registered under his stage name, which it happened Sam had never heard or had forgotten, so that he did not know that his schoolboy friend was among the lost until later, when more detailed accounts came out. He identified Mary Schultze, however, with the M. Schultze who was listed as Miss Boardman's maid. Strangely enough, Mary's death made a deeper impression on Sam than any other single fact, though of all that company wherein figured more than one name of renown, she was the least and most obscure. Sam had grown to know her well; he recalled the last time he had seen her, the time she told him of Sandra's engagement. It was a mid-winter afternoon, and Mary was struggling around the corner of the Flat-Iron Building against a high wind that bounced her skirts unbecomingly — her skirts that were always so hopelessly un-stylish, as even Sam was aware; her hat was over one ear and straight strands of hair switched across her face, and her long nose was reddened at the tip; she raised to him pale-blue eyes that watered a little with the wind — "Oh, Mr. Thatcher!" Poor Mary, poor dowdy, harmless creature, now elevated to the rank of martyrs by the disproportionate tragedy of her end. This death that gained nothing for the murderers, that led to nothing, that served no imaginable purpose, epitomized for Sam Thatcher the imbecile barbarity of the whole slaughter. That a great government, a great power, should bend its monstrous energies to the destruction — of Mary Schultze! He saw the thing defeated justice, and left men with no recourse but revenge; and felt the awful obligation laid upon himself.

He went out, and found when the next ship sailed for home, went to the Victorgraph offices, dictated some letters,

managed to get two or three cable messages sent, bought more papers and read them and walked about the streets restlessly. Everybody seemed to be doing the same thing; Sam had not supposed it was in English people to be so ready to talk, so open. He had some queer experiences, not all grave. Once he got caught in a jam of people at a corner where there were bulletins posted up, and as he was trying to worm his way through, a fine Victorian-looking equipage of a carriage with a team of bays, and with footmen in livery came down the cross-street, with a stout, high-featured old lady sitting erect within and a young boy in the short jacket and pot-hat of a famous school which Sam always beheld with an affectionate amusement wholly American. The old lady, chancing to look in his direction, commanded her coachman to halt, and to Sam's astonishment, beckoned him imperiously. He stepped to the side of the carriage, wondering within him, and took off his hat.

"You want to enlist, my man?" asked, or rather announced the old lady, fixing him with an eye which must have made the underlings of her household tremble; and before he could answer, went on: "You can stand on the step and I will take you around the other way to the recruiting-office. That will be quicker for you than trying to get through from this side."

"Thank you, but I'm not going to enlist here —" Sam was beginning, when she cut him short severely.

"What, you aren't? For shame! A great, strapping fellow like you! Are you going to let them butcher women and babies —?"

"I said I wasn't going to enlist *here*," said Sam.

Something in his face or intonation arrested her. "Ho!" said the old lady, putting up a lorgnette. "Ho! You're an American. I don't like Americans — can't

bear 'em. You don't care about anything but money. Go on, Forbes!"

And she went on, without another look at Sam, who returned to his slow advance with the first smile that had visited his face for three days. But the adventure was not yet over, for directly the boy who had been in the carriage came elbowing up after him, breathlessly jerking out, "Sir, sir!" and followed by one of the footmen with a rather disturbed expression.

"I say, y' know, I — I hope you don't mind my grandmother? Calling you 'my man' and — and all that? She didn't see you were a gentleman; she doesn't always look," said the boy stammering, very red and embarrassed. He was a thin, overgrown stripling, and did not look strong, as Sam now observed.

"That's all right, son. I don't mind being called a man," he said.

"She didn't mean that about Americans, either. She doesn't know any Americans. She just — she just —"

"That's all right, too. Just tell her I'm going to enlist when I get back home, and I'm going back right away," Sam told him.

"They won't let me. I'm not old enough," said the lad wistfully. "Crowder's going, though, aren't you, Crowder?"

"Yes, m' lord," said the footman, and touched his hat.

"Good old Crowdy!" said the boy approvingly. He spoke again to Sam, thrusting out his hand with an engaging mixture of shyness and straightforwardness. "My name's Jack Vincent. If it lasts long enough, maybe I'll get out there after all, and we might meet, eh?"

Sam shook his hand cordially, and told him his own name and added something about hoping to see him "out there," thinking meanwhile that this poor delicate child's

doom was much more likely to fall at home in his bed, than by some German bullet. Months afterwards, reading in some London obituaries that John Gregory Howard Vincent, Lord Carr, had died at Mentone of tuberculosis in the eighteenth year of his age and that with him the title became extinct, Sam wondered if it were the same.

Another time he fell in with a clergyman, and passed a whole morning roaming the streets with him, the reverend gentleman seeming not to have any duties or not to be capable of attending to them, and sticking to Sam "like a burr" as the latter said. "He was about half-crazy, that man was, from brooding over the thing, you know. His 'cure of souls' was down in Kent somewhere, he told me the place but didn't give his name, and didn't ask mine. Nobody on the ship belonged to him; he didn't even know a soul on board of her. I think he must just have run away from home and gone on the loose, because he simply couldn't sit still and think about it. It didn't gee with what he had been trained to preach and think about — about his religion, you know. He kept saying: 'Sir, I am a believing Christian! I am solemnly convinced that the Lord does not willingly afflict or grieve the children of men.' And he'd quote things out of the Bible about 'Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord,' and another place where it says: 'Thus saith the Lord: I will set before thee the thing that thou hast done.' He wanted to know if I didn't think that was the worst punishment men could be threatened with, and talked about people's consciences being their most awful judge, didn't I think so? 'Well, I don't know' I said to him. 'Pioneer times in my country the Indians used to scalp people and torture them and burn them to death — women and children too, they didn't mind women and children any more than these Germans do. I guess you couldn't set before the Iroquois

the things they did; the pioneers didn't try anyhow. They went after 'em with guns. You can't set before a New Guinea cannibal the thing he does; but you can fix him so he won't do it any more. I don't think the Lord would go at punishing that kind of people that way; He'd know it wouldn't be any use. I'm not a church member, but I don't mean any irreverence when I say it looks as if He'd left us the job.' 'That's what I mean, that's what I mean: He will point us the way. The Almighty purpose will be achieved through man's agency!' says the parson. 'That's what I have contended. It is not incompatible with a Christian attitude of mind.' He hadn't said anything of the kind, but I wasn't going to argue with him. The poor devil was about half-crazy," Sam would conclude, shaking his head. "Nice, quiet-looking little man as you ever saw!"

He kind-heartedly endured this companionship until chance relieved him of it. They passed a knot of weather-beaten men, sailors by their looks, in front of a public-house and heard one of them orating earnestly: "The *Titanic* now, the *Titanic*, as yer might say, was the ack of God. But, mates, yer wouldn't think *men* would go to do such a thing, now would yer?"

The clergyman gave a kind of groan and stood still covering his face. Sam, thinking he had been suddenly taken ill, exclaimed in concern, but the other dropping his hands with a despairing gesture showed him a countenance so ravaged by spiritual doubts and questions of which Sam had no conception that his offers of help died on his lips. "You heard him? You heard that poor, honest, simple fellow?" said the minister wildly. "Sir, I am a believing Christian — the ways of God are not our ways — until light is vouchsafed us, we can make no answer — we can only lean on the rock of our faith —"

Sam felt a kind of indecency in listening; he stood by for a moment, awkwardly muttering whatever common-places occurred to him; and then, seeing himself forgotten, escaped at last, thankfully.

He witnessed many scenes at the steamship and telegraph companies' offices of which he never afterwards would speak — or indeed think, if he could prevent himself. Even the few instances of good luck, the few happy surprises were only a little less painful to look upon than the impotent misery of the others. Once he went to the aid of a young girl whom he saw standing by a bench whereon there sat an elderly man apparently verging on some sort of collapse, both of them sobbing hysterically. "You've had bad news?" said Sam. "Let me help you, let me do something for you! Maybe it's not true. Can't I do something?" He addressed himself more particularly to the girl, who was not more than sixteen years old, dressed all in black, and looked pitifully helpless, as Sam thought. "Your father's sick? Tell me where you live and I'll take you home."

"Oh, thank you — that is, we'll go home — we're going home now — only don't bother! Nothing has happened, and we're so glad, that's all!" said the girl disjointedly between her sobs. And the man, looking up, commanded himself with an effort, and blew his nose very loud, and wiped his eyes, and said: "I've taken cold somehow, I believe — very annoying! Tst, tst, Gracie, there's nothing to cry about — there, there, now —" He got up, and patted her on the shoulder, and said to Sam apologetically, "She's been under a severe strain, but it's over now, thank God!"

He was a ruddy-faced Englishman, neatly dressed, with mutton-chop whiskers, the very counterpart of John Bull in the comic cartoons. All at once he began to talk!

"Her father — my son, sir, an only son — was killed at the Marne last fall. My daughter is married in the States — you are from the States, I believe? Quite so! — she has been living there some years, a place called Iowa, you perhaps know it? Ah, quite so! She was coming over to be with us, to — to cheer us up a bit, you will understand? Naturally we have been very lonely — my son, sir, an only son, Gracie's father — it left us very lonely. She has two little girls — she was bringing them over. We understood she had taken passage on this ship — that was her plan. Sir, it has been a very hard time —" His voice failed. "A very hard time — three days — we thought — but we've just got a cable and thank God, they didn't sail!" He broke down again; and as for Samuel Thatcher, he too had to get out his handkerchief.

"You think Doctor Wilson will — er — take active measures now? The States cannot afford to remain neutral now, sir?" the old gentleman said to him earnestly.

"Sure not! I'm going home so as to get into the army," said Sam. He confidently expected a declaration of war from the United States with every issue of the papers, and had answered the same question thus a score of times.

He saw Sandra at last. She was mending slowly — "An astonishingly vigorous constitution, for a woman of so frail a build," the worn-looking doctor said. He had been on duty for thirty-six hours "on end," he mentioned casually and not at all in a complaining manner, adding in explanation that they were short-handed as to medical men, especially surgeons, great numbers of them having gone into the Service. He did not ask Sam any questions, being probably too fatigued, or surfeited with unhappy stories; but the nurses were frankly inquisitive and interested. Was it true that the lady was an actress? A dancer? Dear me, wasn't that too bad, though! Her

feet had been something awful; she was lucky not to lose them. They seemed to be coming round fairly well now, owing to her being so wonderfully strong, and no gangrene, for a wonder; but a dancer! It was a dreadful pity. Her brother and her sweetheart had both been lost, did Sam know about it? He himself was — ? Oh, just a friend. They looked at him speculatively, and stopped outside the door with parting injunctions to be careful and not to let her talk about it too much and get excited — “Though I must say,” one of them remarked; “that they aren’t any of ’em anywhere near so excited, in general, as the visitors! Seems as if they’ve been through too much, and there wasn’t any special point in getting up a how-de-do about it now, poor souls!”

“I suppose I ought not to stay any length of time?” Sam asked.

“Bless you, sir, we’ll take care you don’t!” said the nurse with a laugh.

Sandra looked very small and fragile propped up in the hospital bed; but the voice in which she spoke his name was normal, and her hand though it fluttered unmanageably felt warm and natural in Sam’s big grasp. “I knew you’d come if you were anywhere near,” she said; and began to talk about her father and mother. “I cabled them — some one did it for me, I mean — as soon as I could. They’ve been so kind here — they’ve done everything, everything! And the ship that picked us up — I don’t remember much except that they were kind — they kept trying to make us warm. Everybody is so good. I can’t write yet, but I got the nurse — it’s that one that came with you — to write for me — to Mother, you know — and I signed my name. I don’t want them to worry about me. Poor Mother, it’s going to be so hard for her! You knew about Everett, Sam?”

Sam knew by that time, and told her so, and that he too had cabled and written to the family to say that he was there and would look after her and take charge of — of everything, if they so desired. "Your father just cabled back, 'Yes.' He couldn't send any long message, of course. There are hundreds of them waiting to be sent, though they gave ours precedence over everything else," said Sam. "In the meanwhile I thought I'd just take it on myself to do what I could — whatever seemed advisable —"

"I haven't any money, Sam — I —" Her face changed so tragically as to silence Sam's hasty assurances that that was of no consequence, his adjurations not to think about anything like that. She told him then about Levison, pulling out the watch from under the pillow. "It was the last thing he did. He was trying to take care of me the very last minute he had on earth. He asked me if I had any money — I didn't understand — I didn't know. I never even said good-bye! It was all so quick — we didn't know what was happening — we women, I mean — we did what the men told us to do. We're so used to that — we didn't think what it meant this time. I didn't, anyhow. The men knew — some of them knew. Maybe Everett did; at least he didn't try to get away. But *he* knew. He asked if I had my money and jewellery. We were in a crowd, you know, and I — I only thought how like him it was to be asking that; I thought he was thinking of pickpockets. And all the while he was only trying —" she was silent abruptly. Throughout she had spoken a little brokenly, but without any suggestion of hysteria, and without tears. It was plain she was mistress of herself; the awful thing had not shaken her mentally, as well it might have. Sam found time to wonder at the uncertainty she betrayed about Everett,

and decided that it was unconscious. He had never trusted Everett Boardman — but this was no time to harbour recollections like that, he thought in self-rebuke. He looked at poor Levison's great, showy, bedizened watch and chain and charm, moved and with respect. He said the only thing he could think of — the only thing anybody could think of.

"Well, they died like men!" And Sam added humbly, "I hope I'd have had the spirit to, if I'd been there."

"They wouldn't have been there, if it hadn't been for me," said Sandra. "Mary too — ! I know it wasn't all my fault, but —" She turned her eyes beseechingly to Sam's face, and said, as if confident of his understanding — in fact, Sam did understand after a fashion — "I didn't care for him, Sam — the way he wanted me to, I mean. He thought I cared for him, and I tried to — I tried my best. He'd done so much for me, and that was all he wanted — for me to — to love him. I kept thinking that I could — I kept thinking I *ought* to. But you can't make yourself do things like that. I was going to tell him — I was going to stop it all, and be honest, no matter what came of it. People can't live any way but honestly. As soon as I began to see that deep down in my heart what I wanted was to keep on dancing for the excitement and the money and the feeling that I was doing so much for them at home — why, then I knew that it was too contemptible — I couldn't do it!" She made a slight movement with her hands, expressing finality; it had the beauty and the unmistakable meaning of all her gestures. "It's over now. That part of my life is all over and done with for ever. I *could* dance — but I don't suppose I ever will again."

Sam was inwardly amazed that the doctors and nurses should have allowed her to suspect this grave probability.

He was starting some protest when she interrupted him quite calmly. "They don't *say* — they won't tell me outright, of course, but I shouldn't be surprised. It doesn't matter. That sort of life isn't the happiest for a woman. Perhaps if I were a great genius —. But I'm not, I'm only an ordinary girl."

The nurse came to the door, and Sam obediently got up. "You're going home?" the girl said longingly.

"Next boat — if you're well enough to travel. We'll wait and see," said Sam, with his strong wholesome hand holding hers.

CHAPTER XV

THE other day there was an entertainment given in the Y. M. C. A. hall at Camp Andrew Jackson for the enlisted men assembled there. Lemonade and ginger-snaps were dispensed by ladies who in the intervals of their activities sat and knitted behind the counter at one end of the room; at the other end a mammoth Victor-graph donated by the local branch of the company rendered the latest dance-tunes and in between any number of uniformed young men some with set and earnest faces tense with high resolve, others mechanically smiling, still others as mechanically scowling, turned, advanced, retreated, slid to one side and otherwise performed in time to the music with an equal number of girls. The floor of new pine boards was none too smooth, the place as bare as a barn save for a scarf here and there of tri-coloured bunting, none of the men and only a few of the girls looked as if they were taking the least pleasure in the occasion, yet a feeling of intense, sober enjoyment extraordinarily pervaded the atmosphere! When the record spun out the last bars, there was always an uproarious clapping demand for more; and the obliging little man who was operating the machine — his name was Hoffmeister, his father had carried a musket under Sigel, he himself had applied at the recruiting-offices eight times and been rejected because of defective eyesight, he gave his services free, owned a Liberty Bond, subscribed steadily to the Red Cross, and cursed the Kaiser upstairs and down with thorough sincerity — this “hyphenated” citizen always complied with an engaging zest. Once he appeared to be in some

difficulty with the mechanism, and a big, red-headed officer who had been standing near the door with folded arms looking on, came and adjusted it for him.

"Oh, *that's* the way? Something new, ain't it? I never saw one that worked like that before."

"I have. I used to be in the business," said the red-headed man.

Hoffmeister wound up the Victorgraph, and started a fox-trot. They fell into desultory conversation. Hoffmeister said that this was a good work that the Red Triangle was carrying on — a mighty good work. Nobody talked religion to the boys, they just treated 'em nice and gave 'em a good time; that was better than talking religion in his opinion. It kept this big miscellaneous bunch out of mischief — and he guessed their own homes and people hadn't been able to do that for some of them — when talking religion wouldn't have made a dent on 'em! They wouldn't take him in the army, so he just thought he'd do this — it wasn't much, but he liked to feel that he was "in it." He was a carpet-salesman, carpets and reed furniture. His firm gave the rug and those two rockers the ladies had. They were nice ladies, and all the girls were nice; a good many of them had friends or relatives among the boys, he understood, and then there were some real society ones that volunteered. You couldn't tell the difference, they all acted just as nice. He wouldn't wonder if there was some sweethearting around kind of — young folks, you know — but Lord, that didn't hurt 'em! It made him mad to hear the stories folks told about the camps — he broke off to call the other's attention to that little lady with the black hair; wasn't she a pretty dancer, though?

The officer grinned. "Yes, I've noticed her. I'm going to make her stop directly."

"You are? Oh, you — she —?"

"My wife," said the other proudly.

"Oh!" They watched her for a second. "She sure is an elegant dancer," said Hoffmeister. "Say, I said just the right thing that time to the right man, hey? Well, I meant it!"

"She can't keep it up for more than a few minutes at a time," said the big man, his eyes following her a little anxiously. "I don't know that she ought to dance at all. But she was like you; she wanted to do something so as to be 'in it.'"

"You're good and in it yourself," said Hoffmeister, eyeing his shoulder-straps, with a faint sigh. "Been married long? One of these war-weddings, hey? Any idea when you'll get to go over there?"

"No — no more than anybody else. Soon, I hope."

"Me too!" little Hoffmeister declared with force. "Gee, but I'd have liked to have a crack at 'em!"

The dance ended and the officer's wife paused in front of them, laughing, though she limped slightly. They heard her late partner inquiring curiously: "Say what's the emblem for — the one you got on that chain? You ain't a Elk or a Buffalo, or anything? They don't take in ladies."

"It's a keepsake, that's all."

Hoffmeister was bending over changing the record; he raised up in time to see the couple about to depart, and caught the officer's eye, and saluted cheerfully. "Well, so long! Maybe you'll be started before the next time I'm here. Hit the Kaiser one for me, will you?"

THE END

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